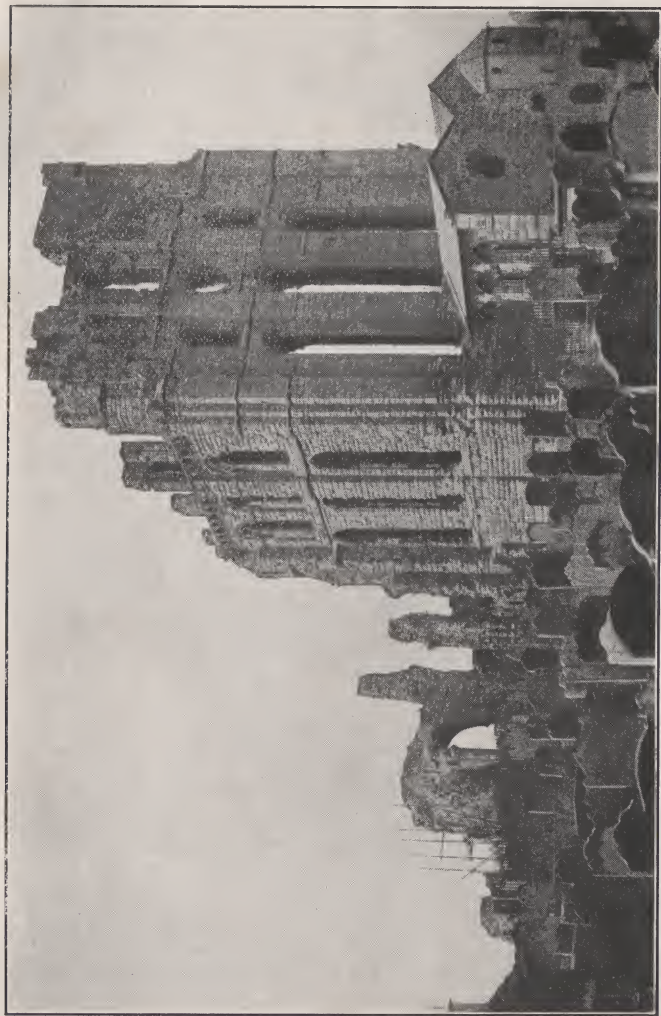


Echoes of Other Days

Some Leaves of Northern Lore

"Time has been likened to a long corridor,
Resounding with the tramp of human footsteps."



[Photo by J. Salmon

Tynemouth Priory.

Echoes of Other Days

Some Leaves of Northern Lore

Transcribed by

D. LUMLEY

AUTHOR OF

"PEEPS INTO THE PAST OF THE NORTH COUNTRY"



SECOND EDITION

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY
NORTHUMBERLAND PRESS LIMITED
WATERLOO HOUSE, THORNTON STREET
NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE

1930

DEDICATED BY KIND PERMISSION
TO
THE VERY REVEREND W. MOORE EDE, D.D.
DEAN OF WORCESTER
RECTOR OF GATESHEAD 1881-1901
BY ONE HONOURED FROM YOUTH WITH HIS FRIENDSHIP

INTRODUCTORY

My earlier book, "Peeps into the Past of the North Country," has been so well received that I am led to feel a measure of confidence in the prospect of the present volume, "Echoes of Other Days: Some Leaves of Northern Lore," which makes essentially the same appeal to "pride of race and place" as its predecessor.

"Peeps into the Past" is more truly historical than these later sketches, and, with exceptions, the actors more august, and the action of wider import. "Echoes of Other Days" might fitly be characterized as "local lore," being mainly of interest to the district from which they are gleaned, though I wish it to be regarded as a companion book.

One of the most charming features which linger around our old towns and villages are the traditions which have come down from the past; and not a few of the incidents herein related owe their origin to the village tale.

The chronological order of the first book is impracticable here, but I hope that the variation of the stories will enhance their individual effect.

There will be found amongst them some both tragic and gloomy—how could it be otherwise?—but to omit them would be to rob history of one of its "mightiest teachers." To quote Lord Lytton—"Looking back over the tombs of departed errors, we behold by the side of each the face of a warning angel."

I wish here to express my thanks to the editors of the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* and other Northern papers for permission to reprint such articles as have appeared in their columns.

The present age, to put it mildly, is one of restless discontent; the future lies before us "all unknown." Only the past is fixed and immutable, and in its contemplation we find a refuge from the increasing strain of modern life.

Like a roll of solemn music the words of the American poet Lowell are borne in upon the mind:

"Wondrous and awful are thy silent halls,
O kingdom of the past!
There lie the bygone ages in their palls,
Guarded by shadows vast—
There all is hushed and breathless."

D. LUMLEY.

DUNSTON-UPON-TYNE.

January, 1930.

TO THOSE ENGAGED IN EDUCATION

I would like to add a special word of thanks to the Directors of Education and the teachers of both counties for the generous support given to my former book, "Peeps into the Past of the North Country," and also to express a hope that the present volume will ere long follow its predecessor into the schools.

D.L.

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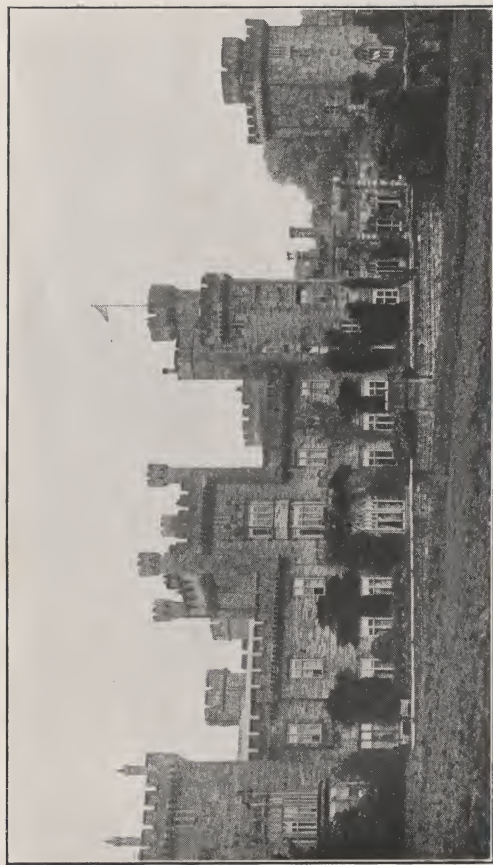
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SIR WALTER SCOTT AND THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON AT RAVENSWORTH CASTLE

RAVENSWORTH PARK, with its Castle of many noble towers, its charming woods, lawns, terraces and picturesque lake, had long been to me one of the finest bits of North-country woodland the eye could rest upon. For many years I regarded this place chiefly as a piece of beautiful scenery of which we North-country folk had every reason to feel proud. Though it is still all this to me, yet it became something much more when, on reading the life of Sir Walter Scott, I first discovered that this great master of romance had not only visited the Castle, but also slept about three nights under its roof.

From that moment Ravensworth possessed an added charm, at least for one of his grateful admirers, and the thought of the "great master" having actually honoured this place by his presence, threw an eternal glamour over the stately home of the Liddells. It became something approaching "a place of pilgrimage." To this newly discovered fact was added the other interesting, yet to me secondary one, that he was for a day at least accompanied by no less a personage than the Duke of Wellington. Surely no two more illustrious men of their day could have met in one place!

Though I have admired Ravensworth when the sunlight played with the shadows of towers and battlements, when the snow laid its white robe on all around, and in "the pale moonlight," when in my opinion the Castle looks the most impressive, yet none of these picturesque effects filled one with such deep emotion as the thought that Sir Walter Scott had been here. Neither did the wonderful interior, with its



[By courtesy of R. Johnston & Sons

Ravensworth Castle.

majestic hall, with handsome staircase at one end, containing a sculpture of St. Michael and the Dragon, and a highly ornamented fireplace at the other; the organ gallery, dining-room, drawing-room, library, etc., and long and somewhat dreary corridors where a visitor could quite easily lose himself. While passing along these corridors after a short pause in the beautiful little chapel, I ventured to glance into the half-open doors of some of the bedrooms, wondering at the same time which room Scott slept in, and I am still wondering.

Returning from a quite recent visit to this magnificent building of many styles of architecture, now made deeply pathetic by the non-residence of its ancestral family, and with a hope that Scott's room would one day be discovered and marked by a tablet, I imagined a picture something like this:

It was on the 4th day of October, 1827, that two strongly-built men were seen walking along the paths near Ravensworth Castle in earnest conversation. One, by his smart and erect walk, had the appearance of being a military man, and when he turned to look around at the extensive landscape, his strong and clear-cut profile, like that of a statue, dispelled all doubt. With prominent nose, firm mouth and bold chin, his face was that of a Cæsar, born to command.

Had the flag tower, with its companions, possessed the human power of expression, surely they would have cried out with one loud voice, "Welcome to Ravensworth, Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, hero of Waterloo!"

The other, who walked with a kind of tired stoop, having also a slight lameness in one leg, might be taken either for a farmer or a country squire. On looking closer at this "tall and somewhat ungainly man," he was seen to possess a head of remarkable dimensions, and when he took off his hat, carrying it

in his hand for some little distance, his massive forehead was like the slope of a mountain. His face, unlike that of his soldier companion, was one of great tenderness, with a mobile mouth and eyes beaming with kindness, yet possessing at the same time a dreamy, far-away look. It was further noticed that his face was not without an expression of sadness, which seemed to speak of fighting with other weapons than that of the sword.

Not only the towers and battlements, but all nature around, from the tallest tree to the tiniest flower and blade of grass, had they the power of joyful and harmonious speech, would exclaim with one accord: "Welcome to the beautiful home of the Bayntons, Gascoignes and Liddells, thou great 'Wizard of the North,' whose pen is mightier than the sword!"

Though Scott in his most interesting diary unfortunately gives us no details of this conversation, this much is told by his biographer: "The two celebrities returned together that night to Ravensworth Castle, and next day the soldier told the author some highly interesting anecdotes about the anxiety of the French officers during the Peninsular War to see the English papers." Much as we would have delighted in reading a record in Scott's diary of his talk here with the Duke, yet we are grateful for that part of it which describes his visit both to Durham and Ravensworth, and which is well worth quoting:

"*October 1st.*—I am to set off to-morrow for Ravensworth to meet the Duke of Wellington. A great let off, I suppose.

"*October 2nd.*—Set out in the morning at seven. We dined at Wooler, where an obstreperous horse retarded us near an hour or more, so I hesitated to go to Ravensworth so late; but my good woman's tales of dirty sheets, and certain recollections of a

Newcastle inn, induced me to go on. When I arrived (at Ravensworth) the family had just retired; Lord Ravensworth and Mr. Liddell came down, however, and both received me as kindly as possible.

"October 3rd.—Rose about eight or later. My morals begin to be corrupted by travel and fine company. Went to Durham with Lord Ravensworth between one and two. Found the gentlemen of Durham county assembled to receive the Duke of Wellington.

"October 3rd.—The dinner was one of the finest things I ever saw: It was in the old Castle hall, untouched for aught I know since Anthony Beck feasted Edward Longshanks on his way to invade Scotland. The moon streamed through the high latticed window as if she had been curious to see what was going on. We got away after midnight, a large party, and reached Ravensworth Castle—Duke of Wellington, Lord Londonderry, and about twenty besides—about half-past one. Soda water and to bed by two.

"October 4th.—Slept till nigh ten, fatigued by over toils of yesterday, and the unwonted late hours. Still too early for this Castle of Indolence, for I found few of the last night's party yet appearing. I had an opportunity of some talk with the Duke.

"October 5th.—A quiet day at Ravensworth Castle, giggling and making giggle among the kind and frank-hearted young people. The Castle is modern, excepting two towers of great antiquity. Lord Ravensworth manages his woods very well. In the evening plenty of fine music with heart as well as instrument. The Miss Liddells and Miss Barrington sang 'The Campbells are coming' in a tone that might have waked the dead.

"October 6th.—Left Ravensworth this morning and arrived at Alnwick, where had dinner and was very

kindly received. The Duke of Northumberland is a handsome man."

While at Ravensworth it is almost sure that Sir Walter would examine the two old towers as well as the fragment of the curtain wall; all that now remains of the ancient fortress, said to date further back than any records extant. We can quite imagine that while he stood by these two broken-down relics of the past, he would be wondering what romantic tales they could unfold if they could but speak. Doubtless, also, he would notice an old cross on an octagonal pedestal which stands near the road leading to the North entrance, known as the Butter Cross, and would listen with interest while his hospitable host gave him the following information: The common tradition is that when Newcastle, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, was infected with the plague, the country people left the provisions intended for the inhabitants of the town at this place.

Though the old Butter Cross still stands silently on the green by the roadside, the two ruined towers still bear their pathetic witness of a far distant past, and the exterior of the Castle looks as stately as ever; yet all is now sadly changed in the whole atmosphere of the place. Could the spirits of these two heroes, one of the pen and the other of the sword, again visit Ravensworth, they would no longer see the noble lord warmly receiving his guests in the great hall, or by his own fireside.

The real glory has departed from the halls and towers of beautiful Ravensworth, and can only return when the ancestral lord comes to his home again. Should this never be realized, it is to be devoutly hoped that this, one of the few picturesque places still remaining within our reach, will ever be preserved from the hands of the spoilers of our country's beauty.

FRIARSIDE RUIN IN THE SNOW

It is a favourite idea of mine that one has never realized the fullest beauty of any picturesque country scene until it has been viewed in four different aspects: the brilliant summer-time, the sombre autumn, the pale moonlight, and in the snow of winter.

This being so, I took a 'bus on one of our recent wintry days as far as Rowlands Gill—a beautiful ride which has been largely spoilt by the opening of the Consett Iron Company's new By-Product Works, which at night-time throw a sordid-looking glare upon the surrounding woods and fields.¹

Alighting at the Toll House, I bore to the left and soon reached the old bridge, now being modernized, which crosses the Derwent at the foot of the Gibside estate, with its glorious woods, which, to me, never looked so grand as when capped with snow.

Towering above them, one caught sight of the stately chapel, with a beautiful white covering upon the dome, and in the distance the lordly monument reared its head above a robe of white.

Crossing the bridge, I took the first road to the right, leading along the banks of the river, now frozen on each side almost to the centre. The tracery of snow-clad trees on the sloping white banks formed a picture beyond any words fully to describe.

Branching off from the river near the viaduct, I continued on until I passed under a small railway bridge, catching at the same time the first wintry sight of one of my favourite monastic ruins. Ploughing a

¹ Written in 1929.

way through the fairly deep snow, and with the white flakes thickly falling, I was soon standing directly opposite this interesting relic of the past.

As it stood surrounded by a white carpet, and its poor broken walls and windows covered with a garment of the same pure whiteness, it presented to me a picture of pathetic loveliness. This in spite of the fact that, though protected by wooden rails, it is surrounded by green painted hen-runs belonging to the adjoining farm.

The white-wooded background, with its sweet river flowing by, though marred here and there with modern houses and pit chimneys in the distance, yet was a thing full of natural beauty, and the falling veil of snow seemed almost to hide everything modern.

My main interest, however, was not at present in the background, but with this reminder of another day, with the snow quickly filling the roofless hospital, like the covering of a funeral pall over the lamented dead. Visions of its departed glory and usefulness passed before one's mind, and in the midst of all the severity of winter, one naturally sought first to picture life here when the cold wintry blast roared about these once hospitable walls.

One tried to picture a weary pilgrim, either a monk travelling on to another monastery in the course of his mission work or a poor stranded traveller on some special journey or other, being welcomed by the chaplain, as he is called, in what little history we have of this Hospital of Friarside.

Perhaps, indeed, some poor wanderer, broken both in heart and body, would here make his last call on this earth, who, after his confession followed by the chaplain's absolution and blessing, laid himself down to die. Though I have seen it nowhere stated, yet it is quite likely that there would be a small burial-ground near the hospital. This supposition seems to



[By courtesy of the Rev. M. H. Huthwaite, M.A.]
Friarside Ruin.

have been held by the present Earl of Strathmore, owner of Friarside, for during the Great War he refused permission to plough over the adjoining land.

On a former visit I have carefully examined what remains of this once beautiful edifice, which still exhibits some interesting remnants of fourteenth-century architecture. The chapel seems to have been separated from the small refectory and sleeping-room by a wall at the west end, and near what I assume to have been the north and main entrance.

With my idea of the original form of this combination of hospital and chantry, I tried, on this bitter cold day, to imagine the kindly chaplain and one of his guests enjoying an evening meal over a warm fire, after which they turned into the chapel for vespers, the priest ringing the small vesper bell. Evening prayers over, they retire to their couch for the night, the chaplain first seeing that a lighted lamp was placed in one of the windows to guide the traveller to this resting-place.

So with the thought of a little kindly light piercing through the black darkness and reflected like a diamond by the white snow, and of the dying away in the distance of a sweet vesper bell, I bid farewell to one of our most precious North-country ruins.

Little seems to be known about the foundation of Friarside, which was united by Bishop Nevil in 1439 to the Chantry of Farnacres, near Ravensworth. We are reminded by Bourn that the earliest mention of it is made in an old register, dated 1312, which records "the collation of Sir John Eryum to the Chantry of Frere Johanside, nigh Derwent." It seems to have been so-called from the name of the first hermit, John Side, a friend of St. Godric of Finchale Priory. Until a comparatively recent date the place around was locally known as Jockside (Johnside).

Further mention is made in 1389, when it is said to

have possessed twenty-seven acres of land at Frosterley, and again in 1538, when we read that the last appointment was made of a joint chaplain to the Chantry of Farnacres and the Hospital of Friarside.

At the dissolution of the monasteries this last priest, or monk, to officiate at this picturesque little place on the Derwent was granted a pension of £5. It now came into the possession of the Liddell family of Ravensworth, passing in 1600 to William Tempest, of Stella Hall. Six years later it again changed hands, becoming the property of William Blakiston, or Blaxton, of Gibside, from whom it passed, with this estate, on to the Bowes family, and through them on to the present Earl of Strathmore.

ECHOES FROM THE OLD BRANDLING HALL AT FELLING

THE escape of a Catholic priest named Walsh from the burning Gateshead House during the passing of the Duke of Cumberland and his army through the town on their way to crush the cause of the Young Pretender, suggested the following—perhaps not altogether visionary—opening to some notes on the Brandling family. The date of this momentous march was January 27th, 1746.

“Almost blinded with smoke as the noble mansion of the Clavering family was being quickly destroyed by the cruel flames of a fiercely raging fire, a priest was seen to rush out of the little chapel, which had been reached by the flames, and after fighting his way through the burning house, to run down the garden in the direction of the river.

“Quickly scaling the wall by the help of the trees, he made his way along the river-banks, and by the most unfrequented paths, in the direction of Felling Hall, then the seat of the Brandlings, a much respected Catholic family. As he avoided, where possible, all used roads for fear of discovery, be sure his journey would be anything but an easy one, and made more difficult by the darkness of night.

“Be this as it may, the brave refugee managed to find his way safely to the north portion of the wall enclosing the grounds, with the fine old trees, beautiful gardens and lake and delightful summer-house. After no little difficulty he succeeded in arousing the keeper of the lodge, who, having strong objections

to being awakened out of a comfortable sleep, demanded to know who it was that disturbed decent folk at this time of night. To this gruff question the priest, though footsore and fatigued by reason of the terrible ordeal he had just gone through, replied, in a firm voice, as became his sacred calling, 'In the name of the Holy Church I, one of her priests, demand admittance and the protection of her faithful sons!' This had the desired effect, and as the man drew the bolts and opened the door, he humbly asked pardon of his reverence, and, after carefully barring the door, asked to have the honour of taking him to his master at the Hall. Leaving the lodge, they took the quickest way to the Hall, carrying no lamp for fear of arousing suspicion, as these were dangerous days for all who held to the Catholic religion. Reaching the noble home of the Brandlings, they found everything wrapped in peaceful silence, made more profound by the mournful sighing of the great trees, as a strong January wind played among the branches. Soon the inner silence of the house was broken by the loud ringing of the main door bell, followed by the equally loud barking of dogs.

"Presently a light appeared on the stairs, followed by a command to the dogs to be quiet at once, and the inquiry, who's there? The answer of the lodge-keeper being satisfactory, the heavy bolts were drawn and the great door opened by the faithful old butler, accompanied by his master; who, with that wonderful spirit, which those then persecuted religionists showed towards each other, received the priest with open arms. It is certain that the first thing that the kindly lord of the manor of Felling did was to provide food and suitable clothing for this begrimed and ragged priest. Then he would listen to his sad news of the wanton destruction of the home of the Claverings by a wild mob of Protestants, as the Duke with his

murdering soldiers passed by on their way to put down the rightful heir to the throne; and of his miraculous escape as 'a brand from the burning.'"

Though there is no doubt that Father Walsh would be for some time the welcome guest of Squire Brandling, and perhaps also his chaplain, yet apart from his escape from Gateshead House, the only other historical record that, so far, I have seen of him is his death and burial. According to "Mackenzie" he died in 1775, and was buried in St. Nicholas Churchyard.

The Manor of Felling, say the pages of our history, was held of the Prior of Durham in the reign of Henry III (1216-72) by Walter de Selby, becoming in 1331 the property of the Surtees, the last of whom died in 1509. After long legal contests among various claimants, Sir Robert Brandling, about 1552, became the owner of Felling estate. This merchant adventurer, one of the most honoured of Newcastle's citizens, was Sheriff in 1524, and five times Mayor between 1532 and 1564, as well as chosen three times to represent Newcastle in Parliament. When he died in 1568, there were few men who had served their country, and the North in particular, so faithfully as the first Brandling of Felling. He received the honour of knighthood from the Earl of Hereford, Protector of the Kingdom during the minority of Edward VI, while Mayor of Newcastle, for the firm stand the town took against the Scots.

The other Robert Brandling that we read most about in our local records distinguished himself in quite another direction, for which he has been handed down to history as "the turbulent squire." Born in 1575, he was introduced to the public notice as "the heir of Felling," and though seemingly the scamp of the family, having been excommunicated at Durham in

1630, he is nevertheless a very interesting personage to read about.

The Hall continued to be the residence of this family till 1760, when Charles Brandling, taking a special fancy for Gosforth, built the mansion which still stands in what is now Gosforth Park.

In the chancel of Heworth Parish Church there is to be seen a mural tablet to the memory of some members of this family, though the dates range only from 1744-76.

The remaining portion of the Old Hall, which had long been converted into the Mulberry Inn, was demolished somewhere about 1909, and the present Mulberry Inn erected opposite, and with the exception of the stones built into several of the houses, part of the wall, and a door or two used by the enterprising builder, all that remains to remind us of the past glory of Felling Hall is part of the once beautiful summer-house. This last remnant, known locally as "Brandling Tower," or "The Tower," is, therefore, the only remaining link of the family who for several generations made their home at the Felling.

This summer-house was a modern addition, and, judging by the style of the building, may be said to date back somewhere between 1700-20. It stood in the garden a short distance north of the Hall, in the midst of beautifully wooded surroundings. Now all else is gone except this pitiful relic, which finds its garden replaced by the playground of a council school, and its once lofty trees, by the usual modern school buildings, and so-called up-to-date workmen's dwellings.

Mr. John Oxberry tells us that until comparatively recent years the interior of this ruin bore traces of the wealth and tastes of its former owners. It was ornamented with panelling and wood casing of an exceptionally fine kind, executed by highly skilled workmen. The late Sir George Elliot, when he

bought Felling Colliery, was so struck with the artistic value of the woodwork in the building—then used as an office—that he decided to remove it to his residence at Houghton Hall. As this plan was never carried into effect, one wonders what became of the summer-house woodwork.

In the old church which preceded the present All Saints' at Newcastle, there stood a monument to Robert Brandling, merchant adventurer, which had upon it the family crest, the representation of an oak in flames (a burning brand). Upon this crest was the noble motto "Fide et virtute" (by faith and virtue). Inscribed upon the same monument was a quaint play on the family name:

"Like as a brand doth flame and burn
So we from death to life do turn."

How he was related to the first Brandling of Felling Hall, I have never been able to discover.

There can be no surer evidence of the lasting mark this family left upon the Felling and district than the adoption of the burning brand as the official crest of the Urban District Council. The genuine respect shown to this family was not only peculiar to the people who lived near their beautiful home at the Felling, for wherever a Brandling went he seemed to carry a kindly atmosphere with him; and it is written for ever to their lasting honour, as well as that of the Felling, that, "The Brandlings long held a prominent place in the North of England for gentlemanly urbanity and extensive hospitality." The many hearts of the inhabitants of Newcastle responded so freely to this kindness, that we read that someone in the old Theatre Royal recited impromptu lines to Miss Fanny Brandling, a beautiful and accomplished member of the family.

The Brandling summer-house, or the remaining portion of it, is to be seen a little north of the site of

the Hall, latterly the old Mulberry Inn, which stood almost opposite the present railway station, across the bridge, and near the interesting old Brandling station, with the family crest on the front wall, as well as a coat of arms accompanied by the letters B.R. This is said to be one of the oldest railway stations in the country.

While visiting these reminders of a bygone day, I was informed by the manager of the inn of the traditional belief that one of the Stuart kings planted a mulberry tree near the Hall; hence the name. The Gateshead House stood behind the Holy Trinity Church, in the grounds of the Hospital of St. Edmund, the chapel of which is the oldest portion of the enlarged church. An old gateway belonging to this house stands in the south of the outside wall facing High Street, which is well worthy of our notice.

GEORGE STEPHENSON'S FIGHT FOR HIS SAFETY LAMP

HAD we been walking near the lake in the beautiful grounds of Gosforth House, then the residence of Charles John Brandling, for several years M.P. for Newcastle, on a certain dark night in the early part of the nineteenth century, we would have been more than surprised at the appearance of a light playing about the water. On looking closer we would further have noticed that a working man in the prime of life was thrusting a long stick in and out of the lake, on the end of which there seemed to be attached something like a fishing-net. From this he was laying small objects on the bank which, by the faint glint on them, seemed to be fish of some kind, though the size of them pointed to the fact that this strange fisherman with the lamp was after other sport than that of food. He was either playing at the schoolboy game of catching minnows with a light, or experimenting for some purpose or other. Presently another figure emerged out of the darkness, who by his bearing and dress was clearly not a working man. Instead of charging this working man with trespassing in private grounds, we heard this gentleman call out in that cheerful tone which bespoke both sympathy and friendship:

"Well, George, and how is the experiment proceeding?"

"Very well, sir, thank you. I think I have got it to burn all right under the water."

This working man was none other than George

Stephenson, the Wylam born boy, who became the greatest of the early railway engineers, who, by contriving a lamp to burn under water, with which after dark he caught fishes, began those experiments ending in his invention of the safety lamp known as the "Geordie." The gentleman who joined him was Mr. Brandling himself, a watchful observer of his proceedings, and who proved himself to be one of Stephenson's most loyal supporters. Stephenson lived at this time at West Moor, near the eastern entrance to Gosforth House.

From brakesman at Killingworth Pit, Stephenson was appointed enginewright, turning his attention to the production of the locomotive engine.

While his thoughts were turning to the invention of a safety lamp to protect the lives of the miners, amongst whom he was brought up, being thus well aware of all the dangers of their occupation, there occurred in 1810 a disastrous explosion at Felling Colliery, belonging to his friend, Mr. Brandling. This called with no uncertain voice for the speedy need of the safety lamp.

Stephenson, having by patient and even dangerous experiments settled on the principles required, now made the lamp, the safety of which he repeatedly demonstrated by experiments.

Several months afterwards Sir Humphrey Davy produced his lamp and published his views upon the subject, which was the beginning of a disagreeable controversy between these two well-meaning men and their supporters.

Sir Humphrey Davy now brought his model lamp to Newcastle, and exhibited it to the coal-owners; on which occasion we are told more than one gentleman was heard to remark: "Why, it is the same as Stephenson's!" In spite of the fact, which seems to have been agreed upon by those who are qualified to

know, that the first safety lamp adopted for practical use in the coal-mines was contrived by George Stephenson, the apparent injustice was done by giving the credit to Sir Humphrey Davy. This was made more glaring after the issue of the following official statement:

“ A Committee sat in the House of Commons in 1835, which, after making a careful and detailed inquiry into the whole subject, distinctly stated that ‘ The principles of its construction appear to have been practically known to Cluny and Stephenson previous to the period when Davy brought his powerful mind to bear upon the subject.’ ”

Dr. Cluny, of Sunderland, whose lamp was constructed before Stephenson’s, though safe, was, according to Smiles, found impracticable and not adopted. Thus Stephenson would appear to be left alone in the field as the first to invent a lamp which the miners could carry about with them, a lamp that “ would give light enough to enable them to work by in dangerous places, and yet be safe.” This is known as the “ Geordie ” lamp, and became a great favourite among miners. Both the “ Geordie ” and the “ Davy ” are now largely replaced by electric lamps.

Notwithstanding all this, Stephenson’s claim does not seem to have been recognized at this time beyond the limits of his own district, and his distinguished rival carried off all the honour belonging to such a valuable discovery. What chance, it was asked, had the unlettered and unknown workman of Killingworth with such a brilliant competitor, backed up both by powerful supporters and the Press? But though Stephenson had not the popular brilliance of a Davy, he was both an original thinker and worker as well as a strong North-countryman, and so he calmly, yet firmly, asserted his claim to the invention.

No small indignation was openly expressed to the great scientist's friends because of the "presumption" of Stephenson. To settle, as they thought for ever, this claim of Sir Humphrey, and to belittle that of his humble rival, his advocates raised a testimonial, with the result that a sum of £2,000 was presented to him as the inventor of the safety lamp; but at the same time a purse of 100 guineas was voted to George Stephenson in consideration of what he had done in the matter.

This was looked upon as something like an insult to Stephenson and his friends, the foremost of whom was his neighbour, Charles John Brandling, who was seconded by John George Lambton, afterwards Earl of Durham. These gentlemen persuaded him to publish a statement of the facts on which he based his claim. This was done by the help of Mr. Brandling, and sent to the local Press, and the controversy now became keener than ever, and disagreeable personalities were flung about on both sides, though never, so far as I have seen, by Stephenson himself. Stephenson's advocates followed the example of those of Davy, and a meeting was called, Mr. Brandling occupying the chair. It surely speaks volumes, both for the noble and modest character of the man himself, and of the genuineness of his claim, that a highly influential committee, including the Earl of Strathmore, was formed for his defence.

As with Davy so with Stephenson a testimonial was raised, with the result that a subscription of about £1,000 was raised, which was headed by Lord Ravensworth giving 100 guineas. It ought to have been a lesson to Sir Humphrey that the Northern colliery-owners to a man were on the side of Stephenson. This sum, together with a silver tankard, was presented to him at a public dinner given in the Assembly Rooms, Newcastle, in January, 1818, Mr. Brandling, his strong man, making the presentation.

Sir Humphrey Davy was, however, in no measure abashed; and referring to the testimonial and money presented to Stephenson as the "inventor of the safety lamp," characterized as "infamous the resolutions adopted by his supporters," and alleged that he had only "pirated his invention." "It will turn out," he further added, "a very disgraceful business for the persons who agitated it, for there never was a greater imposture than that of Stephenson's."

The noble part played by a Brandling throughout this now historic "battle of the lamp" between his humble neighbour and this brilliant scientist is but one more instance of the fearless way the members of this once famous local family have kept their ancestral "brand" burning for the welfare of their native North Country.

It was a younger brother of Stephenson's friend, Robert William, who was the enterprising projector of the Brandling Junction Railway.

THE BRANDLING RAILWAY STATION AT FELLING, A LANDMARK IN RAIL- WAY HISTORY

ONE wonders how many visitors to the Felling—nay, even of the residents—know of the existence of one of the oldest and most interesting amongst the disused railway stations in the country. It is found across the railway bridge almost opposite the present station, and near the site where once stood the home of the Brandlings.

It was while hunting up information about the family that I stumbled across this picturesque stone building. With its gables and windows, it had the appearance of a lodge to a gentleman's house, and one's interest was quickened by seeing on the front wall the representation of the "burning brand" of the Brandlings above a coat of arms accompanied by the letters B.R., a replica of which is to be seen on the front of the present station.

In my research into the past, with its world of romantic railway history, the first important thing I came across was that famous body of colliery-owners known in local history as "The Grand Allies." This association of local magnates was founded about 1721, during the palmy days of the coal trade, when prices were kept high by monopolists agreeing to limit the output. It consisted of such powerful North-country—the Brandlings, George Bowes of Gibside, the Russells of Brancepeth, and others, who, being owners of the most powerful local collieries, were enabled, by the high London prices given for their coal, to dictate terms to the other collieries.

For the purpose of carrying their coal to the river for shipping, this enterprising body laid down wagonways in all directions, beginning with wooden rails upon which wagons ran down inclines after being pulled uphill by horses. From this primitive method they went on to iron rails and winding engines, the first of which, it is said, was erected at Birtley Fell in 1808, and, in conjunction with George Stephenson, they were amongst the first people to use the locomotive.

One of the most active members of the alliance during its waning days—this monopoly being brought to an end in 1845—was Robert William Brandling, of Gosforth, who belonged to the family so long resident at Felling Hall. He, with his brother John, obtained in 1835 a Parliamentary Act for the formation of a railway from Gateshead to South Shields and Monkwearmouth. Its capital was £110,000 in £50 shares, and was known as the "Brandling Junction Railway."

In the presence of the originator and a good company of friends, the first turf was cut at the Felling in August, 1836. Though this was certainly an eventful day for this home of coals, chemicals, glass, and iron, yet it was a still greater one when the inhabitants saw the first cargo of coals carried along the line from Andrews House Colliery to be shipped at South Shields. The jubilant directors and their friends returned to Newcastle in about seventy wagons and carriages, being then the largest train seen in the North.

The date of the opening of this portion of the railway is given as August, 1839; and in the month of September following, the entire line from Gateshead to South Shields and Sunderland is said to have been opened for passengers and goods.

The extension of the Brandling Junction Railway seems to have been, on the one hand, to the Redheugh, Gateshead, through Oakwellgate, on to Hillgate, and down to the riverside, where the coals were shipped

from the quay, and, on the other, to Sunderland. At the Redheugh there is still to be seen the old station of this company, opened in 1837. The Close, said to be the first railway station in Newcastle, was used from 1837-42.

Steps were now taken for the erection of a railway station at the Felling, and one can well imagine the interest with which the people would watch the growth of their first station. It was opened in 1842, and though I can find no record of this opening, yet it was doubtless a day of some importance and rejoicing in a district whose manufactories were beginning to make themselves known, not only throughout the country, but over the whole world.

The Brandling Junction Railway proved one of the most important in the district, until in 1844 it was purchased by the Newcastle and Darlington Railway Company, beginning that amalgamation which in 1854 culminated in the formation of the North Eastern Railway Company. After this union a larger station was built a little to the east of the original one. This in turn becoming inadequate for the ever-increasing traffic, the present one was opened in June, 1896.

NEWCASTLE'S OLD JEWRY

"Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward."
—*Exodus.*

How many visitors to the Stoll Picture House in Westgate Road, Newcastle, or who were wont to enjoy a play or pantomime in this building when it was the Tyne Theatre, ever dreamt that just outside the walls of this famous place of entertainment sleep some of the fathers of Newcastle Jewish colony? Being until quite recently ignorant of the existence of this small burial-ground, I determined, after a confession of ignorance, to make a personal investigation. After some inquiries in the neighbourhood, I found that the only means of access to it was through the wine and spirit stores of Messrs. Higginbottom & Co., in Waterloo Street.

Here the men in charge appeared to be accustomed to visiting inquirers, and, if anything, pleased when they saw the usual notebook. One of them quite naturally took down a bunch of keys from a nail on the wall, and, with the graveyard key, proceeded to open a door at the end of a warehouse, and the formal, or rather solemn, manner in which he slowly opened the way from the living to the dead seemed to me "significant of much."

As one passed through the doorway, into what Christians have named "God's acre," as it lay surrounded on all sides by high prison-like walls, everything spoke of decay and desertion. The grass was starved, the few small trees sickly looking, though one

said to be an ash was making something of a struggle to hold up its head. A little bit of cheerfulness was given to this drab spot by the green of the ivy which sparsely climbed about the dismal walls. As the sunlight is shut out from this place of Israel's dead, no flowers, it is said, ever come to bloom.

To this grim background are added about eight graves and five tombstones, age-worn, crumbling and uncared for. The stone in the best condition marks the grave of someone who died in 1851, and as the Hebrew inscription is quite discernible, it seems to be one of the most recent burials. Though this, the smallest cemetery in Newcastle, said to be over a hundred years old, is thus shut out from the world, it is visited yearly by the Jewish Burial Board, who, by so doing, show respect to those long dead members of their race. Regarding its extent, it might be something like twenty-six feet long, triangular in form, by about twenty-four feet at the widest end.

With many thanks to the guardian of wines and spirits, who, luckily for him, was not a Spiritualist, I left those few sons of Israel in their lonely sleep, far away from the land of their fathers, to wait the promise.

From here I turned up Peel Street adjoining, and from thence into Temple Street, where still stands within easy reach of the old cemetery Newcastle's first Jewish Synagogue, opened about the year 1838. It was the result of the zeal of the earliest local Jewish congregation, who, it is interesting to note, held their first meeting for worship in a private house in Westgate Road in the year 1830. This edifice, which gave the street its name, is a strongly built stone erection with the date, according to the Jewish calendar, clearly carved on the front. Whatever was its aspect and the surroundings at the time of its foundation, to-day it looks dark and dreary as the tomb, which dreariness is

greatly intensified by one of the dullest of town streets, to say the least of it.

For many years this square, grim building was the sacred place of the Jewish fraternity until, becoming too small for the growing congregation, it was replaced about 1881 by the present Synagogue in Leazes Park Road. The old Synagogue, which has been recently bought by the Newcastle Co-operative Society, is at present used by the Wesleyans, and is known as the Temple Hall Mission, though not even this is able to lessen the grim desolation of this deserted home of "old Jewry."

Fortunately finding the caretaker on the premises, I was enabled to have a look around the inside of this former resting place of the chosen people. In the large room, once used for worship, there is still to be seen, raised on a kind of dais, the "Ark of the Covenant," which is to be returned to the Jewish people should the building be pulled down. From this place we descended by a trapdoor to the dark, underground story, with a damp, grave-like atmosphere prevailing, where are three cellar-like rooms, in one of which is a bath sunk into the ground, being approached by a few steps, which, I suppose, would be used in some of the religious observations.

My guide now informed me that from underneath this mysterious-looking bath there is an underground passage leading to the old cemetery. I did not see the passage, so I cannot vouch for the reality of its existence. Be this as it may, one was not sorry to leave this dismal vault-like place, and to ascend into the room above, where we were again faced by the decorated pillars of the holy place of the Jew, the people who, as we are reminded by Lord Beaconsfield, "not only created Christendom, but gave us our day of rest," as well as some of the most powerful minds the world has ever seen.

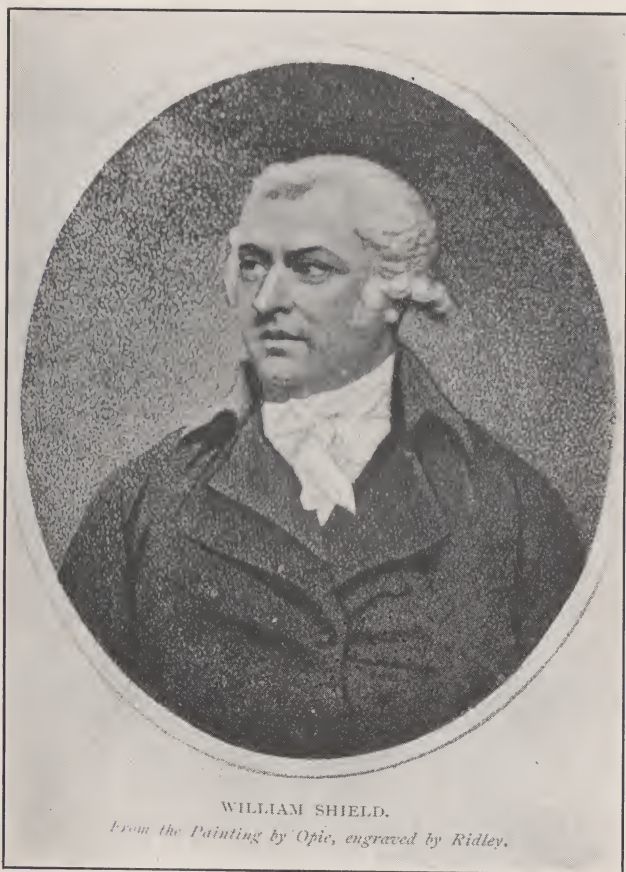
WILLIAM SHIELD, THE SWALWELL MUSICIAN AND COMPOSER

A CENTENARY TRIBUTE

JANUARY 25th, 1929, being the centenary of the death of William Shield, the Swalwell boy who became one of England's greatest composers, I would like to refresh the public memory with a short sketch of his life and work as a kind of foreword to the coming celebrations, which I trust will be as creditable as were those of Thomas Bewick.

Though Bourn, the historian of Whickham, tells us that so little notice seems to have been taken of the great musician by the inhabitants of the village that even the house in which he was born is not known, yet the oldest native and resident, Mrs. Home, who is eighty-seven, declares that her mother, who not only remembered William Shield, but was also related to him, had no doubt whatever about the matter. This house, which is a three-storied building, red-tiled, is situated on what is known as the Waterside. It is the highest in the row, with the Wherry Inn on one side and a small shop on the other. Even if this is not the actual house of his birth, it seems to be believed that it was one of this group by the waterside.

Here, in 1748—the actual date of his birth is not known, and March 5th, as generally given, is that of his baptism entered in the register of Whickham Church—there came into the world, this wonderful soul of melody, and son of a struggling music teacher, William Shield. From his father he received



WILLIAM SHIELD.

From the Painting by Opie, engraved by Ridley.

[By courtesy of the Rev. M. H. Huthwaite, M.A.]

his first lessons in music, and at the early age of six he began to practice the violin, followed by the harpsichord, on both of which instruments he soon acquired considerable skill, more especially on the violin, from the first his favourite instrument. At the age of nine he had the misfortune to lose his father, and he was now faced with the stern duty of having to help in the support of his mother and three or four young children. Though anything not belonging to music was quite foreign to his nature, yet for a while he threw this aside and became apprenticed to a boat-builder, Edward Davison, of South Shields.

We can imagine this child of music after bidding farewell to his mother, brothers and sisters, setting out with a brave front from his home by the waterside. In his prosperous days he was often heard to describe his feelings when he packed up his clothes, not forgetting his violin and little stock of music left him by his father, bade adieu to his mother, and her remaining children, and proceeded to the place of his destination.

His master, to whom the world owes a debt of gratitude, proved himself both kind and indulgent, allowing his apprentice to turn his talents to account by playing at musical entertainments at Shields, to the delight of all who heard him.

As soon as he had completed his apprenticeship he wisely resolved to bid farewell to the building of boats, and to follow his beloved music, the hand which beckoned him on. By this time he had so far progressed in violin-playing that he was chosen to lead subscription concerts in Newcastle; where by his talents he won the admiration of Charles Avison, the organist of St. Nicholas's Church, one of the most famous musicians of his day, as well as the kindest of men. He showed his practical interest in this quickly rising musician by giving him lessons in thorough bass,

which Shield afterwards developed in his book on the "Rudiments of Thorough Bass."

Shield's first success up the ladder of fame was taken at Sunderland in 1769, when at the consecration of St. John's Church the choir of Durham Cathedral sang an anthem, which he had composed for this occasion, it is said, at the request of the Bishop of Durham. The immense congregation were delighted with this composition, which the best judges pronounced an excellent specimen of church music, and his reputation rose higher from this moment.

We next find him at Scarborough, to which place he was invited to undertake the direction of the fashionable concerts, becoming the leader in the orchestra of the theatre, for which he composed the music of several songs, written by his friend, John Cunningham, the pastoral poet, who was an actor here at this time.

While at Scarborough he became acquainted with some famous musicians of the day, who were so pleased with the masterly manner of his work that they strongly advised him to visit London.

To London, therefore, he went, taking such high testimonials that the leader of the orchestra at the Opera House gave him a place amongst the second violins. So brilliant was his execution that in the following season he was promoted to the rank of principal viola, holding this important post for eighteen years. During this period he was most active, producing several operas both for the Haymarket and Covent Garden Theatres, of the latter of which he became musical director, filling this post with great success for several years. His fame now reaching the Royal Household, he was appointed one of the Musicians-in-Ordinary to George III.

After his production in 1778 of his first drama, "The Flitch of Bacon," he went on from one success to another, doing an amazing amount of practical and

theoretical work, becoming now recognized as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, English musician and composer of his day. With the object of gaining information in his art, he visited both Paris and Italy, though he was so thoroughly English that, excepting on the critical side it is said he was not much influenced by his tour abroad. His books now began to be studied, and his song tunes sung everywhere throughout the country, till the name of Shield became a household word.

A further honour yet awaited him, though he seems to have sought nothing higher than perfection in his art. On the death of the master of the Musician-in-Ordinary to the King in 1817, he was appointed by the Prince Regent to fill this post, now standing on perhaps the highest pinnacle of fame of any English musician of his age. Though his books, which did such a great work in his day, have been largely supplanted by later ones, as he well knew they would be with the growth of knowledge, yet, as one writer has well said, "His airs will never be discarded; they will appear at each revival in unfaded loveliness, and recover the influence which was gained by their early charm."

William Shield seems to have been a man of sterling character, not unlike our other great artist, Thomas Bewick. In spite of his hard and continuous work, he had passed his eightieth year when he died at his house in Berner's Street, London, on January 25th, 1829. He was buried in the South Cloister of Westminster Abbey amongst other men of genius who have done honour to their country. His resting-place is marked by a marble tablet with a suitable inscription, erected largely by the efforts of the late Mr. Joseph Cowen, of Stella Hall. He left his fine Stainer violin to King George IV, who only accepted it on the condition that the widow be paid its highest value.

Not being an authority on music, I have made no attempt to criticize the works of Shield, nor to give a list of his numerous compositions.

In conclusion, let me give a quotation from a newspaper cutting of some years ago which is of local interest: "We are indebted to the late Dr. Collingwood Bruce for the investigation which led to the proof that the verses of 'Auld Lang Syne' were wedded to the rousing music of William Shield, who, by a coincidence, died in the same day of January on which the Scottish poet was born."

A monument to his memory has been erected in Whickham Churchyard. It was unveiled on October 19th, 1891, by Dr. Thomas Hodgkin; and an address, prepared for the occasion by Mr. Joseph Cowen, was read by Mr. John Robinson.

THE EFFIGY OF TOM PAINE BURNT AT SWALWELL

THE pedestrian who happened to find himself at Swalwell on a certain day near the close of December, 1792, would have his curiosity not a little aroused by the sight of a funereal-like procession slowly parading through this village notorious for keelmen and "Crowley's crew." It was led in a most orderly manner by a dignified-looking personage fully arrayed in the robes of a judge, accompanied by several other important officials, who looked as if they had just acted as jurymen in a serious trial. Behind the pseudo representative of the law, with his retinue, there followed, or rather rumbled, an ordinary cart in the centre of which was seated and bound a dejected-looking and somewhat thickly-built "man." By his side was to be seen a tall man of powerful physique and wearing a mask, whose brawny arms seemed to be holding up this sorrow-stricken criminal.

Next to this ghastly spectacle came a large crowd of villagers, who, by their decorum, were fully impressed with the solemnity of the occasion. Each man wore in his box-hat, the common head-gear of that day, a black cockade, while others wore small labels with various devices printed on them, such as "God Save the King," "King and Constitution," etc.

On arriving at the middle of the village or market-place, the procession halted before a crudely-erected gallows with a cruel-looking rope dangling from its arm, beneath which the cart bearing the criminal was drawn. The man with the black mask quickly seized

the rope and forced the noose over the head of the condemned "man." After he had unbound him from his seat, he roughly hauled him up by the neck amid some groans and cheers till his body swung several feet from the ground.

This gruesome act was too much for our pedestrian, who ventured to ask a forbidding-looking member of the procession, and no doubt one of Crowley's crew, why they were hanging this poor man in such a brutal manner. "Poor man indeed!" replied this indignant Swalweller. "Let me tell you that there hangs, what I am sorry to say is only the effigy of Tom Paine, the notorious blasphemer of his God, and vile traitor to his country, which he tried to sell into the hands of the blood-thirsty revolutionists of France, as well as siding with the American rebels. But we are not finished with him yet; and if you will wait a bit you will see the end of this scoundrel and his detestable pamphlet, which is poisoning the country from end to end. In one of his hands you will notice is fastened the pamphlet, while in the other is the emblem of his trade, that of a stay-maker, which trade he has for ever disgraced, as well as the Quaker sect, to which his parents belonged."

After the now interested spectator had waited for some little time, he saw the sham body cut down and bound to a stake set up near the gallows. The faggots were then lighted, and the effigy of the author of "The Rights of Man" and "The Age of Reason," who was for a time Deputy on the Council of Robespierre, was burnt to ashes, in sight of the loyal people of Swalwell. No sooner had the last smouldering ashes of "Tom Paine" died out than the large crowd of witnesses struck up with a grand chorus of "God Save the King," which was accompanied by "sundry volleys of small arms and cannon."

We can well imagine the member of Crowley's crew

reminding our supposed visitor to Swalwell, as he parted with him, that "though we are keen to fight our masters for our rights, and to handle roughly anyone who interferes with our liberties, yet we are loyal to King and Constitution. Did you ever hear 'God Save the King' sung like that?"

The above not altogether imaginary "vision of the past" is founded on an interesting account of this ceremony at Swalwell which appeared in a local paper in the beginning of January, 1793, fully quoted by Bourn in his "Annals of the Parish of Whickham," also on the following notice in Sykes' "Local Records": "In December, 1792, Thomas Paine, the author of 'The Rights of Man,' etc., was burnt in effigy at most of the towns and considerable villages in Northumberland and Durham."

It is somewhat difficult in these days to realize the fear that the people, including the leading statesmen, of our country had of the influence of Paine and his writings, one bookseller being punished with fourteen years' transportation for circulating "The Rights of Man." Paine himself escaped by rushing off to France, where, owing to his sympathies with the revolutionists he had been elected a Deputy to the National Convention. To his credit, be it said, he alone voted against the execution of Louis XVI, for which he was cast into prison, where he wrote part of "The Age of Reason." For this daring act he was marked for the guillotine by the Robespierre faction, and it was only by a miraculous intervention that his life was saved.

Of Paine's escape from death Carlyle writes thus near the end of his powerful book on this reign of terror:

"The turnkey, list in hand, is marking with chalk the outer door of to-morrow's victims. Paine's outer door happened to be opened, turned back on the wall;

the turnkey marked it on the side next him, and hurried on; another turnkey came and shut it: no chalk mark now visible; the batch went without Paine. Paine's life lay not there."

After being released at the request of the American Minister, he was again given a seat on the Convention. But, it is said, he soon became disgusted with French politics, and we next find this great agitator in America. He died in New York on June 8th, 1809.

Though Paine was extreme in his opinions, as well as vain and bigoted, yet he was a man of great courage and endurance, and seems to have been quite sincere in his desire for social and political reform. Be this as it may, the stagnant age in which he lived called for such a man to arouse the country from her lethargy.

OLD AXWELL, ONE TIME SEAT OF THE SELBYS AND CLAVERINGS

At the western extremity of Whickham, just before entering Fellside road, there is a very steep road known as Whickham Bank leading down to Swalwell.

It is one of the sunniest afternoons in June, and I would like to be followed while telling of a tour of investigation, in the hope that it may prove of interest.

We therefore take this bank until we reach the colliery on our left, past which we turn, and continue on till we come to eleven curiously arranged beech trees on our right, locally named "the eleven sisters."

Bearing slightly to the left, we step out along a pleasant byway, generally distinguished as "old Axwell road," and soon reach the delightfully situated farm of Wood House. Before reaching this farm we are met with the well-known view of Axwell Park with its Hall and beautiful woods; deploring at the same time the sight of the fire and smoke from the new By-Product Works.

The road now becomes more and more sylvan, and to our great joy we find ourselves surrounded on all sides by scenes of great loveliness. Almost opposite the farm there is to be seen a little path, leading down to the river, now closed to the public, the name of which at once provokes our interest. It is called the "Lady's Walk," and is believed to have been used by the Clavering ladies, on their way to and from Axwell Park, and perhaps Whitehouse. The river was crossed by a dam of stones known locally as the Dam-head, which are

pointed out as having been used by the feet of these ladies.

A little past Wood House and about opposite the colliery ruin with its disused shaft, which has almost the appearance of a kind of castellated tower, there seems to have been a gate with walls on either side. Here, I assume, began the actual carriage drive of the Manor House of Old Axwell, and from this point we begin to pass between trees of various sizes, having also on our left a most delightful copse. A greater treat is now in store for us in the sight of several noble beeches, lining the drive on both sides, and as we proceed we find ourselves passing through an avenue of trees thickly lined on either sides with evergreens, holly, and wild flowers.

The birds now sing their loudest, they also being filled with delight at all nature; and we feel convinced that here is one of the most charming bits of our North-country scenery and what, in its day, must have been one of the finest carriage drives.

As we pass from the shadow of the trees we catch sight of a modern-looking farmhouse nestling on the grassy slope of the hill, variously known as Green's Farm or Old Axwell. Here we behold the main object of our visit, and though a modern farm in its main construction, yet if its old stones could speak, how gladly would we listen while they tell of the days when they formed part of the noble Manor House of the Selbys and the Claverings.

Though we read that in 1411 "pardon was granted to Roger Thornton, of Newcastle, for purchasing without licence this manor from Thomas Redheugh, of Gateshead," nothing further seems to be heard of the estate until the middle of the sixteenth century.

It was about this date that a member of the influential family of the Selbys first settled here, and this may have been none other than the George Selby, Alderman

of Newcastle, who in 1538 appears in the family pedigree given by Surtees.

Whether this be so or not, we learn that from this time the Selbys, who owned extensive lands at Winlaton, lived here in all the style of the gentry of the period, up to the end of the sixteenth century. Bourn, the historian, of Whickham, tells us that the foundation stones recently seen a little to the west of the farm, show "that it was a mansion of large dimensions with a number of outhouses," some of which, no doubt, form part of the present farm buildings.

From Old Axwell the Selbys now removed to Whitehouse, situated on the opposite side of the river, about a mile west of the present Axwell Hall, and in 1648 we read that Sir George Selby was in residence here.

The Selbys were followed to Old Axwell about 1630 by a member of the ancient family of the Claverings, and this charmingly situated Manor House continued to be a happy centre of English aristocratic life. The Claverings had as their near neighbour some members of the unfortunate Hardings, who lived in Hollingside Manor on the opposite side of Clockburn Lane. So influential were these two Royalist families considered by Cromwell, that it is thought his troops went down this lane on the way to Stella, so that, if possible, they might strike terror into their hearts.

At the south-east corner of Whickham churchyard stands an old red-tiled coach-house and stable, where it is said the Claverings put up their carriage and horses while attending Divine service.

Like the Selbys, the Claverings seemed charmed with Whitehouse, and on this family leaving about the year 1740 they again succeeded them, remaining here until the present Axwell Hall was built about 1761. Of the residence of Whitehouse there seems to be nothing now remaining.

With the exit of the Claverings began the downfall

of Old Axwell, and it was not long after this date that the splendid mansion was demolished, and not only was the present farm built of its stones, but I should imagine many of the buildings and walls in the immediate vicinity.

From about this time until 1881 it was farmed by a family of the name of Hopper, and one, Jack Hopper, is remembered by the old residents of the district, by his find of a kale pot of money in one of the fields where he was erecting a cow-stake. Then the Greens followed, which family gave to the farm its perhaps best known name. It is also told by the natives that about this time a box containing coins was dug up underneath the floor of one of the farm buildings, and that old money has been discovered from time to time.

The most interesting find on record is that of a silver can in good state of preservation, bearing the date of 1584, discovered some years ago by workmen carrying out repairs. One wonders who is now in possession of this relic.

But it is now time we said something about the farm itself, all that remains to remind us of the past glories of the old Manor House.

By the kindness of Mrs. Stephenson, the wife of the present farmer, I was enabled to look over this tomb of the past, and though little of architectural interest is to be seen, yet there were evidences of age on almost every stone and pillar.

Above a rather interesting and slightly moulded doorway in the front of the house there is to be seen a well preserved sun-dial, though one regrets the absence of any date. However, the most important of the remains is the entrance to the farm from the road along which we have travelled, the old carriage drive. This is an old semicircular doorway above which is a stone bearing the date 1632.

After this brief inspection of the farm buildings, Mrs.

Stephenson kindly took me into a raised room with a bay window looking directly down the valley, and showed me the glories round about. From here we looked upon Winlaton Mill, a hamlet literally set among trees, a joy to pleasure-seekers; and on the wide expanse beyond. To our left, beautifully sheltered by trees, we caught sight of the lonely ruin of the Manor of Hollinside, sole reminder of a once powerful race of the Hardings, with the glorious background of Gibside woods, and its towering monument. Indeed all round us is to be seen a view impossible for words to describe, though let it be said that the slowly setting sun increased the loveliness by the touch of its golden mantle.

Bidding good night to Mrs. Stephenson at the farm, and with many expressions of thanks, I started on my return journey along the same old carriage road by the beeches. The pleasant evening stillness with the now mellowed songs of the birds seemed to lay a touch of romance on all that one had thought about the past glories of the old Manor House of Axwell and its families.

“ Wondrous and awful are thy silent halls,
O kingdom of the past!
There lie the bygone ages in their palls,
Guarded by shadows vast.”

—J. RUSSELL LOWELL.

SIR HENRY CLAVERING, "THE LAST OF THE BARONS," IN HIS AXWELL HOME

"The stately homes of England,
How beautiful they stand!
Amidst their tall ancestral trees,
O'er the pleasant land."

—MRS. HEMANS.

ON one of the sunny afternoons of July, 1927, I determined to carry out a long cherished project by paying a visit to Axwell Hall and Park. To my own personal grief, for I love an old mansion, let reformers say what they will, I had watched for some time the gradual and cruel mutilation of one of the most beautiful of our country seats, which dominates the district for miles around. A modern innovation in the form of a useful, though anything but artistic-looking, bridge over the Derwent had caused the removal both of part of the boundary wall of the park and one or two of the lodges, and in the lower part of the park have been built several red-bricked semi-detached villas. The whole modern aspect of the place as seen from the road, when one remembers what it was in the days of its glory, when the deer bounded across the greenward, was saddening in the extreme.

As I raised my eyes from the half-finished bridge, with its cranes and other implements of work, and the modern houses to the still stately hall on the hill among

the trees, it reminded one of a beautiful picture set in an ugly and broken-down frame. To make things worse it is not only the frame that is ugly and broken, but the picture itself, the fine and perhaps unique Georgian mansion which has been sadly marred by the requirements of the Newcastle Boys' Industrial School. Yes! this is what has become of the stately home of the Claverings, made notorious by Sir Henry Augustus Clavering. The bridge has since been completed to the great advantage of the increasing traffic, and the Consett Iron Company have opened By-Product Works on the banks of the river.

When I arrived at the Hall, having taken a short cut through the park, I found it silent and deserted. It was a silence which touched one with melancholy, like that of a great tomb. Not troubling about the reason of this desertion, but rather feeling thankful for it, I set out on my own, passing from the eastern front with the coat of arms of the "last baron" high on the wall, to the noble south front, with the same coat of arms in a similar position.

From the fine terrace on this front we can plainly hear the musical ripple of the silvery Derwent, and I stood there with the bright sun shining on all around, and looked on the river, hills and woods. I thought that never before had my eyes rested on a more lovely and peaceful scene. On the two pillars at the top of the steps leading from this terrace to the green in front was to be seen the same coat of arms, which on looking closer I found to consist of a rampant lion on the top with an open hand on the shield beneath. These were repeated on the pillars of the steps on the noble front entrance, and as I noticed the bold stone lions and hands to be seen in every direction, they suggested the name "Hall of the Lion and the Hand."

After enjoying this view to the fullest extent I walked in the direction of the extensive stable buildings with

the clock in front, and so silent was it all that I heard the echo of my footsteps against the deserted hall. But now this silence was broken by other footsteps, and presently the figure of a man emerged from the stable buildings. Though sorry for this break into a rising poetic vision, I felt glad for two reasons: first, the cause of this entire desertion would be explained, and secondly, and most important, I might be able to get a look inside the Hall. Fortunately my intruder, who informed me that he was the painter instructor, happened to be one of the most genial and friendly of men. To the question, why this desertion? he replied with feelings of relief, doubtless, that the boys were camping away in charge of the master. To my other anxious question, he hesitated, doubting whether he could safely do so in the absence of the master. However, on hearing the reason of this visit, he decided to run the risk, and producing the magic key from his pocket opened the door leading into this "Hall of Enchantment." It was indeed a happy stroke of luck to find ourselves alone in this mansion, and to tread on ground once alive with all the gaiety and splendour of English aristocratic life.

But alas! now all was changed. The noble entrance-hall was still practically the same, though the fine staircase was gone for ever, and in its place a great gap reaching up to the dormitory, which was formed by connecting these once beautiful bedrooms. From the entrance-hall we went into the noble dining-room with its four large mirrors on each wall, its fire-place with marble mantelpiece, as well as some other remnants of a former glory, this being one of the most unspoiled rooms. It is now used as the boys' library and game-room. My guide then led the way into the lower drawing-room, now a class-room, calling my special attention to the beautiful ceiling, which one hopes the boys can appreciate. Next we visited the

room once used as a library, from which we have a glorious view; and one quite envied the boys their class-room. After seeing the billiard-room, once the kitchen, which still retains the old fire-place, and noting the polished oak floors and panelling, I suggested going upstairs, but was quickly informed it was not worth while, as the upper story had been mutilated into the mere dormitory of a public school or other kind of institution.

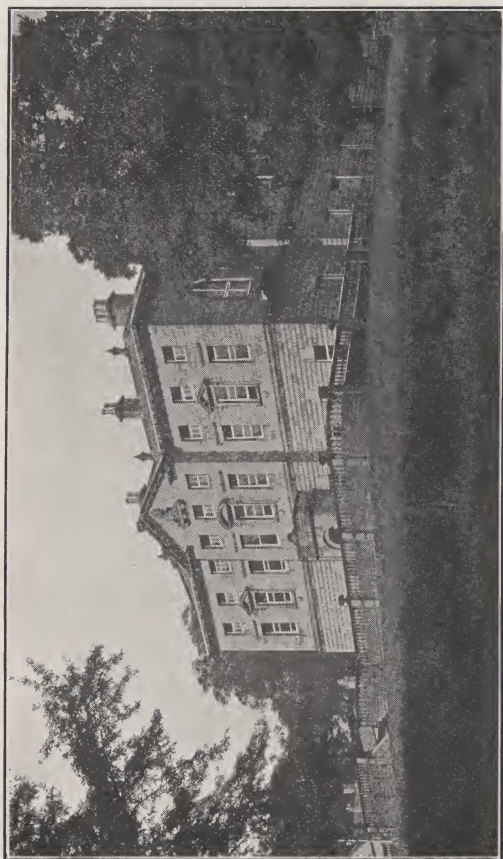
Having had more than enough shocks, I had no fancy to see rows of boys' beds with a modern connection of the rooms. Before parting with one who from being a perfect stranger had become a friend, I asked him if he had any personal knowledge of Sir Henry. To this he replied in the negative, having come to Axwell with his successor, the Rev. J. W. Napier-Clavering. But he did the next best thing by giving me the name and address of the oldest living servant, and house carpenter of the late baronet. After bidding him good-bye, with many thanks for his kindness, I was not long after seated in the comfortable room of Mr. T. Riddell, at Bates Houses, Blaydon, who had served the family at Axwell for fifty-two years, beginning with Sir Henry's predecessor, Sir Thomas, and finishing under the present owner.

The following anecdotes about Sir Henry were received either from Mr. Riddell, or others who had come into personal touch with this somewhat eccentric and Byronic personality. Sir Henry, who was a retired naval captain with distinguished service abroad, was a sport in the widest sense of the word, loving dogs and horses and all manly sports, and hating both a servile "toady" and a coward. He had not long been on the estate before those about him saw that he was a man of no ordinary calibre, and one with whom it was not wise to trifle. On succeeding his cousin to the estate and baronetcy in 1872, he had the Hall painted

throughout, as well as carrying out many necessary repairs and making some valuable additions. It is told of him that each morning while the painting was proceeding, he walked around the Hall to see how the painters were getting on with their work, and, no doubt, to have a kindly word with them. The man in charge happened to be just the type of servile creature that Sir Henry couldn't tolerate. Not only did he touch his head to the baronet each morning, but every time he passed him. Ever a man of action, Sir Henry surprised this, to him despicable being, both by his naval manner of attack as well as his emphatic language. "Look here, my man," he said, "if you think fit to salute me when I come in the morning all well and good, but don't go about all day pulling your — head off."

Behind all the bluff manner of Sir Henry there was in the main a kind and human background, and of him could be well applied the old and time-worn saying "his bark was worse than his bite." Knowing that poaching was carried on throughout his grounds, he set the police on to watch, with the result that two men were caught and brought before him. Assuming the tone and manner of an angry judge or naval officer, he asked them to give an account of themselves. "Well," said the spokesman, "it is this way, Sir Henry, we are both out of work; my mate has five children and I have seven, and we haven't a bite to give them, and as we could not steal elsewhere, we thought we'd chance it and take home one of your rabbits to feed our bairns with."

Calling for the cook, Sir Henry ordered her to bring a good feed for these two men, and to put up two large parcels of food for their wives and children. Then he inquired their names and addresses, and the next day he sent his housekeeper to see if they were telling the truth. She returned after finding



[By courtesy of R. Johnston & Sons

Axwell Hall.

their stories were quite correct. One of their wives, Mrs. Collingwood, he asked to come and be a char-woman at the Hall, which work she did as long as she lived.

It is well known that Sir Henry took a keen interest in the Swalwell flower show and sports, which were held annually in the park; indeed he might truly be said to have been its mainstay. Amidst most picturesque scenery and near the beautiful lake, upon which several swans gracefully sailed, the marquee and small tents were erected, dancing being held in the evening.

On one occasion while the men were finishing with the erection of the tents, Sir Henry with his dogs appeared on the scene, and for some reason ordered one of the men named Harrison to stop with his work. This he promptly refused to do. "What!" said Sir Henry, "can I not be obeyed on my own ground? If you don't do as you are told, I will set the dogs upon you." "Do so then," returned Harrison, who was a rough, dare-devil kind of fellow, "and after I have stopped the breath of the dogs I will stop yours. Don't you think, Sir Harry, that you are the only man that's been in the Navy."

This went right home to the heart of the old naval captain, who asked this man who dared defy him, what ship he was in. To Sir Henry's surprise he replied by giving the name of the very ship of which he was captain, and by further adding that the man who threatened to set the dogs on him was his captain, who was so plucky at sea that he was nicknamed "Mad Harry." So overjoyed was Sir Henry, that he not only heartily shook hands with his old comrade of the seas, but ordered him to come at once to the Hall and drink to the memory of old days.

While the flower show was in full swing next day everybody was filled with astonishment when the carriage of Sir Henry came upon the scene, and more

so when they saw Harrison dressed in full naval uniform sitting beside his old captain, both looking happy and smoking long cigars. Sir Henry kept his old comrade at the Hall for a week, talking over their sea days and living on the very best.

Speaking of dogs, the following is worth repeating. When some men were busy mending the roads in the park, one of them laid his "bait" on the grass at the roadside. Presently Sir Henry came along with his dogs, and one of them seeing the "bait" went up and smelt it, though before he could do any harm was smartly called off by its master. Going up to the road-menders he asked whose parcel it was the dog had touched. When the owner admitted that it was his dinner, he ordered him to come up to the Hall and dine, as he must by no means eat after his dog. On examining his parcel the owner found that the dog had not even broken into it, and so he decided not to go to the Hall but to eat his own bait. While the men were enjoying their outside meal, they were surprised by a messenger enquiring why the man had not come to the Hall, and ordering him to come at once. When he arrived Sir Henry asked why he did not keep his promise, and on the man explaining, replied that this did not matter at all; he should have stuck to his word, and there and then ordered him to sit down and have a good feed.

Sir Henry who boasted that he had been the best officer in the British Navy, was not above using his fists, being ever a firm believer in the noble art of self-defence. It is related that on one occasion he quarrelled with Mr. Battensby, the head joiner and under-agent, and so angry grew the words passed between them, he struck out at his agent. Battensby replied so severely that he soon knocked his master completely out, upon which Sir Henry offered his hand, saying at the same time that he was a better man than

himself, and that he was to think no more about their dispute, but go on with his work as usual. He is said to have had a similar experience with his butler, who on proving himself the better fighter was given a rise of wages.

Another butler was dismissed for robbing the church. It was the custom of Sir Henry when he did not attend service himself to send a guinea with the butler. Meeting the Rector—I expect of Winlaton—on one of these occasions, he asked him if he got the usual contribution all right, as he had sent it with his man. No doubt Sir Henry would express himself rather strongly when the Rector told him that he had only got half a crown, the butler having pocketed the rest.

Perhaps the following is the most eccentric story that I was told. On the cook sending in her notice to leave his service, he at once went to the kitchen to demand an explanation. When she gave as the reason that there was not sufficient air in the kitchen, he replied, “Oh! is that all? We can soon remedy this,” and seizing the poker he let in the air by breaking every window in the kitchen. Speaking of his servants, who as a rule seemed to get on well with him, it is also related that the laundrymaid gave in her notice not being able to tolerate his language. Hearing this he went and told her to take no heed of him and not be so foolish, as it was just the same as “God bless you.” Truly a strange character was this “Bluff old Harry!”

That behind all this bluff manner there was a kind heart I have already shown, and the following incident will further bear this out. While he was out walking one day a poor man, not knowing who he was, accosted him with the words, “De ye think ye have an aad coat, mister?” Sir Henry at once took off his coat and went home in his shirt-sleeves.

He had some strange hobbies, one of which

was collecting bronzes, and it is said that he hardly ever refused a dealer's offer of a bronze statue. On the ottoman in the entrance-hall he had caused to be fixed a horrible figure representing his "Satanic Majesty," which so terrified visitors that they preferred standing, to sitting in such company. Needless to say this was removed by his reverend successor to the estate. Perhaps it was his fondness for bold figures which caused him to have the stone lions and hands of his coat of arms erected both on the terrace and the steps of the main entrance as well as on the two main fronts.

Regarding the motto of these arms, Mr. Riddell said he thought it to be "The hand of friendship with the boldness of the lion." Though this does not happen to be the true meaning of the actual Latin motto, I venture to think it is quite as good if not a better one. As I have nowhere seen the literal translation of the words on the coat of arms, "Nil actum si quid agendum," I render them something like this: "Never lead doubting the purpose."

Though the number of interesting stories attributed to this, one of our most original of North-country personalities, is almost legion, yet we must resist temptation and stop somewhere. This will be with one told to me by Mr. Riddell, which might be said to savour of the prophetic.

Sir Henry had been away shooting in Scotland, arriving at Blaydon station by a train too late to send for his own carriage. He therefore hired a local cabman to drive him to Axwell, giving instructions to stop at the first iron gates on the right, quite forgetting the cemetery which had recently been opened. The poor driver, quite proud of having such a passenger, whipped his horse up to its quickest speed, looking in the darkness for the first iron gates. Stopping here as instructed, he opened the cab door to let out Sir Henry,

who on perceiving his mistake, stormed at the driver for wanting to put him into the cemetery, perhaps adding that he would get there soon enough. Setting off again, they soon arrived at the right gates, and in spite of his storming no doubt this fiery baronet would well reward the cabman and wish him a kind good night. Whatever were Sir Henry's feelings about this "uncanny" incident, he not only decided that his ashes should rest where the cabman had stopped, but had a noble vault built to hold them. For some reason or other he changed his mind, and, it is said, tried to sell his vault, but as he could not find a buyer, his ashes were destined to rest where the cabman stopped, within "the first iron gates on the right."

His death, which took place on Friday morning, November 9th, 1893, came with painful suddenness, like the stopping of a cab at the iron gates. Shortly after he arose he felt so very ill that he was forced to complain, and before anything could be said or done, Axwell's chief was no more. Thus passed away in his seventieth year Sir Henry Augustus Clavering, the descendant of twenty-five generations of loyal English gentlemen, and who, when living, was said to be the only man who could prove a direct line from a custodian of the "Magna Carta."

His remains were cremated at Woking, the urn containing the ashes being brought to Blaydon Church, where it remained overnight. On the following day, Thursday, after a most impressive service, the church being draped with heliotrope cloth, the urn containing the ashes of the last baronet was solemnly borne to its home. The bearers of the urn, which rested on a bier, were the four oldest workmen on the estate, the only one of the four now living being Mr. T. Riddell, who kindly gave me much valuable information. The other three, Mr. Thomas Battensby (who fought and defeated his master), Mr. James Marshall,

and Mr. Fred Bollam, have followed their master within "the iron gates on the right."

So into dust vanished Sir Henry Clavering, "Last of the Barons," and his ashes now rest in their little urn in his self-erected tomb. Though the name of one of his daughters is also inscribed on the outside, she is buried where she died, at Wellington, New Zealand.

IN THE OLD ASYLUM DAYS— DUNSTON

THE remaining fragment of the once beautiful home of the ancient Marley family, known as "Dunston Lodge," and for over half a century one of the best known lunatic asylums in the north, now presents a sad spectacle to the gaze of the beholder. The only inhabited portion standing is a small building facing the south, the upper story having been used formerly as a billiard-room. In the front of this house, happily still partly wrapped in wooded seclusion, there is to be seen the gentlemen's "airing court." Standing on this pleasant lawn, surrounded by some fine trees and thick bushes, we have quite a touch of the past; and can almost imagine we see the inmates coming out to take their daily walk, or sitting on the seats provided for them.

To prevent the unruly from making their escape, this court was guarded by a high brick wall, close to which ran a deep ditch or kind of dry moat. This sloped quickly from the level of the lawn, and it needed a good spring over it to catch the top of the wall; a feat, however, which several were able to accomplish.

At the opposite side of this same house there is also to be seen what remains of the ladies' "airing court," which, though fairly well wooded, is quickly falling into decay. Running alongside the outer wall of the house, and supported on iron poles, is a ruined slated portico beneath which the ladies used to walk on wet days.

To the west of this same fragment, and joined to it, we notice, in a terribly dilapidated condition, a long building with five iron-framed windows on one side with very small sashes, now used for stones. All around the walls, a few feet from the ground, are holes plugged with wood, as if there had been wainscoting. This is said to have been the ballroom. The only other buildings remaining are parts of the wash-house and some outhouses.

But what perhaps arrests the eye most are some remains of red brick bounding walls, and the pitiable looking broken walls of the old mansion itself, speaking to us as only such ruins can speak.

As we look upon them, with only half of the bottom windows left, they appear more pathetic, if this were possible, by being filled with the white flower of the elderberry, like flowers growing over a tomb. However, we are glad to say that not only are these poor broken walls crowned with thick elderberry bushes, but are still overshadowed by several noble trees which proudly hold up their heads.¹

Among these branches that sweet soloist—the thrush—as well as other birdland songsters, sing as sweetly as they did when Dunston Lodge was in its glory, or to the inmates of a sadder day. It was the living tomb of many a sad life. The view from this house, when in its day, must have been one of delightful variation, and in all directions, with the river close by and hills all around. Its picturesque front looked on an ideal country lane, known as Dunston Lane, or the “lovers’ walk.” This beautiful lane, with its thick avenue of trees, seemed to begin at the bottom of Carr’s Bank, of which it was in reality a continuation, and end on the sloping banks of the river. Alas! it is now not even a shadow of its former self!

¹ Written in the summer of 1924.

Directly opposite the Lodge front, and on the other side of the lane, was a spacious recreation ground, which was tastefully laid out with flower-beds and lawns. Here cricket was played by those capable of doing so, and also the game of bowls on a green provided for the purpose. This site, which has not yet been completely spoiled by the builder, is used partly for a tennis-court and partly for gardens. In the days of the Marleys "Dunston Lodge" must have been an ideal residence, and if we could look back on it we would no doubt see a typical home of the old North-country English aristocracy, with its domestic joys, its sports and hunting, and all that full life which filled the ancient homes of England.

Then quite in painful contrast we see this picture changed, and this once happy home, now filled with poor human beings afflicted in the worst of all possible ways, and all honour to those who, out of an honest heart of sympathy, strove to lighten the heavy burden which their unfortunate fellow-creatures had been called upon to bear. To some, alas! too heavy to be borne, as more than one suicide has shown, the awful thought of which is too deep for ordinary words to express.

Dunston Lodge was first opened as a lunatic asylum in the year 1830 by Mr. J. E. Wilkinson, who is said to have founded it as a public institution. He was succeeded in 1852 by Mr. Cornelius Garbutt, it now becoming a private asylum. In its management he was ably assisted by his son William, who in 1865 took entire control; and up to the time of its closing, in 1900, showed the greatest tact and judgment in all matters concerning the working of this institution. So much so that in a printed pamphlet the position of this asylum was shown to be one of the highest throughout the country; and that a large number of the inmates through right and humane treatment, combined with medical skill, had been dis-

charged recovered. This was issued by Mr. George Herring, at one time Editor of the *Tyneside Echo*, in 1884.

Here from time to time were confined several members of influential families, and it is said that a male inmate escaped during the night and walked all the way to his father's hall in Weardale, arriving in a wretched state, with his boots worn down to his feet by the rough roads. Old people still speak of some of the unfortunate inmates who were familiar figures in the village, and who, by the harmlessness and gentleness of their manner, had won both the pity and respect of the people. One of the best remembered seems to have been a certain lady, who was always seen with an umbrella and a bundle as if ready for a journey, and who used to walk daily down to the boat-landing and wave farewell to the boats and ships as they passed. It was whispered abroad that a disappointment in marriage had caused her to lose her reason, and she was always prepared to go on her marriage journey. It is also said that she used to carry about, even into Church, a bundle of books tied together with string.

Another who seemed a great favourite with the boys was known as "Captain" Fisher, who took his daily plunge in a large pond to the west of the asylum. This kind-hearted soul was devoted to his dogs, and on the death of one of them he reverently buried it in a carefully dug grave and erected a wooden cross at the head. He attracted attention by his red Garbaldian shirt and the whistle which he wore around his neck. Nothing pleased the boys better than to get a blow of his whistle.

Though one has heard various opinions about the conduct of this asylum, yet one hopes that in no way can it be likened to those exposed in Charles Reade's novel, "Hard Cash," mainly written to call attention to the abuses of private lunatic asylums.

Every consideration seems to have been shown for the inmates, and every peculiarity and freak closely watched. Dances were frequently held in the ballroom, where friends were invited to dance with the inmates until their bed-time, which was not a late one. After they had gone, no doubt having been slyly persuaded by the attendants that the dance was finished, the visitors continued their dancing until early morning. On Sundays friends or attendants accompanied the inmates to Divine service, which was held in the mission room, opposite the old church school, until the parish church was built.

Prayers were also said every other day during the week in the large dining-room, and had the late, and first Vicar of Dunston, Mr. Jones, been alive, he could no doubt have told many touching experiences while going in and out amongst the inmates seeking to "minister to minds diseased."

In the asylum days we are told that the estate consisted of something like sixty-five acres, including a farm and gardens; and the once noted gardens are still to be seen on the west side. These are now cultivated by Mrs. Kennedy and her sons, market gardeners, who reside in the only remaining portion of the "Lodge." A large staff of servants was, of course, needed for the working of such an institution as this, including those who came into close personal touch with the mentally deranged. I mean the attendants or keepers, both male and female. Among servants I have met, all have spoken in high praise of the Garbutts, who have left quite an honoured name in the district.

THE MEETING OF THE JUDGES AT SHERIFF HILL

THE time of our picture is during those romantic coaching days, which received their death-blow when railways came into existence, though they live for ever in the pages of Charles Dickens.

The moving scene is on the old Durham road, almost opposite the handsome residence of Deckham Hall, standing on Carr's Hill, to the left of the road, which takes its name from the original owner, Thomas Deckham, who died about the year 1615, and said to have been at one time suspected as a hiding-place for Jesuit priests.

Here, in imagination let us take our stand, and with the expectant crowd await the coming of the sheriffs of Northumberland, on their way to meet the Judge of Assize on Sheriff Hill.

The custom which gave the name to this healthy wind-swept village on the hill is said to be one of the oldest connected with Gateshead and district, its origin having been traced so far back as 1278.

This all-important event being kept as a kind of gala day, the members of the crowd were filled with the lively spirit of holiday time, no man being a stranger to his neighbour. Hawkers were busily engaged selling their wares, and strolling players amusing attentive audiences.

Indeed, to the observant spectator, everybody seemed more anxious to have a lively time of it than to see the sheriffs' procession. While all is going thus merrily, we are suddenly aroused to the seriousness of

the occasion by loud cries of "Here they come! here they come!" rising above the babel of voices.

Yes. The procession is now upon us, after having passed over the Tyne Bridge, then up High Street; and in an instant perhaps most of the people have left the hawkers and strolling players to gaze in wonderment at this awe-inspiring piece of pageantry, and to follow it to its destination.

Let us attempt to describe this procession, as with the crowd we follow it on in the direction of the "Old Cannon Inn," where was to be met in state the most august person of the law, "his Honour the Judge."

First came the livery men, followed by the bailiffs and the trumpeters, who led the way for the "gaoler" bearing a black wand, whose appearance seemed to send a thrill of terror through the spectators.

After this dreaded instrument of the law came the sheriffs on horseback with many of the county gentry, all well-mounted, who were followed by the sheriffs' state coach drawn by six of the finest horses.

The rear was brought up by a long train of carriages belonging to the neighbouring families of importance; and one heard it remarked that the large number of gentry present both on horseback and in carriages was due to the popularity of the High Sheriff.

Borne by the crowd, we follow the procession up the hill till we reach the "Old Cannon" standing at the point known as "Sod House Bank." This took its name from an old inn, with a sod-covered roof, which stood about here.

As soon as the sheriffs' coach reached the inn, the sheriffs, with their attendants, alight and enter the best room, where we heard it said wine and punch awaited them provided at the sheriffs' own expense.

If any were so fortunate to catch a glimpse through one of the windows of this best room of the inn, it is likely that they would see these gentlemen enjoying

their wine and punch as they awaited the arrival of the judge.

All is now lively around the outside of the "Old Cannon," when we suddenly hear another and more solemn cry raised: "The Judge! The Judge!"

There is no doubt that the very sound of this terrible word "judge" would draw a deep sigh from many of the womenfolk, who would realize that his coming meant imprisonment, transportation, or perhaps death to some poor mother's son or daughter.

This cry reaching the ears of the sheriffs and their attendants, they at once left their seats and rushed to the door of the inn, opposite which stood the empty state coach with its six fine horses.

Here they received "his honour" with stricter decorum, after which he enters the coach, taking the back seat. The sheriffs "High" and "Under" then follow, placing themselves in the front seat, and as we watch this mode of procedure we are reminded of the following words of an old manuscript: "The sheriffs must observe these forms, viz., to step into the coach after the judges and step out before them, and stand a little aside and always with their backs to the horses." When all had taken their right places and the correct order observed, the procession started on its return journey to Newcastle, now bearing with it the great personage who was to decide the doom of the unfortunate wrong-doer.

As the last carriage disappears down the Sheriff Hill, with its glorious view, our old-time vision disappears and we now find ourselves standing alone opposite the modernized "Old Cannon Inn."

COUP OF THE ARMY OF CHARLES I AT WHICKHAM

As we can best realize any historical event by the transportation of our mind into the period and atmosphere in which it occurred, let us now forget that we live in the year 1929 and hark back to the year 1640.

On August 27th of this year, when the few people composing the population of the village of Whickham were in dread of what was going to happen next, we find ourselves walking along the top of the Church lands and adjoining fields. In these fields which lie to the north of the church and slope towards Swalwell, we are not a little surprised and awed by the sight of a fairly large encampment of soldiers with all the military equipment ready for battle.

Even though it was well known that King Charles I was playing into the hands of bishops and courtiers, to the danger of the nation's peace, yet we felt relieved when we saw that the tents belonged to his army and not to that of his Scottish foes.

On the other hand we were not a little alarmed to observe a spirit of restless discontent amongst the troops, and an evident want of that strict discipline without which no army can be victorious. Further, by the grumbling remarks overheard, it was doubtful whether they wanted to beat the Scots or not in what they spoke of with a tone of disdain, as the Bishops' war.

"No," we imagined we overheard one stalwart soldier remark, "we are quite willing to fight for the rights of the people or for the King, but not to help

the Bishops to force their Prayer Book upon the Scotch people who don't want it."

Clearly, then, there were serious divisions amongst the ranks, and the officers, whom one could see both by their manner as well as the expensive uniforms they wore, belonged to the best families of the country, had no little difficulty in maintaining military discipline.

However, in spite of all this, the tents of the King's army, with the royal standard and other flags flying, looked picturesque and inspiring as they now rested in these sloping fields, overshadowed by the ancient parish church.

The dress of the soldiers added largely to the picturesqueness of the scene as they moved about with their long, flowing hair, wide-brimmed hats with cockades, knee-breeches tied with a bow, and shoes fastened in like manner—a striking contrast to Cromwell's Ironsides and Roundheads who were afterwards to visit the village.

If they could find time, be sure some of them would take a walk into the main street of the village, where they would no doubt be greatly admired by the gentler sex, who from all time have been attracted by the glare of the military uniform. Even if during this flying visit none were able to get beyond the camping ground, be sure that not a few of the young women would manage to have a peep at the tents and a cheering word with some of these men under arms. As one watched the officers moving about with their horses, in which they took great pride, one wondered if any of them were visited by members of our local county families, such as the Claverings of Axwell, the Hardings of Hollingside, or the Blaxtons of Gibside; one of the latter, Sir Ralph Blaxton, suffering severely for his loyalty to Charles I.

Presently we notice anxious movements taking place amongst all ranks, and that the officers are seriously

talking together in groups, as if contemplating either an attack or retreat. At the same time several horsemen were sent off quickly towards the west as if to watch the movements of the enemy. Becoming quite anxious and feeling a bit afraid, we ventured to question one of the soldiers, who told us in a tone of hurried anxiety that word had come that the Scots under General Leslie were crossing the river at Newburn to attack the English at Stella, after which they would soon make short work of our poor fragment of the King's army.

Now into the camp the horsemen came galloping back with the news that the Scots had crossed the Tyne with a large contingent of musketry and cannon, and were preparing to attack the English at Stella. Whether the officers gave the order to retreat or not, I am not prepared to say, but the whole camp sprung to the retreat like one man, and in a moment all was utter confusion and disorder.

To our further surprise we now saw the tents set on fire, for as there was no time to strike tents and prepare them for transport, it was at once decided to burn them rather than let them fall into the hands of the enemy.

In a very short space of time the entire camp was ablaze, and the flames, helped by the wind, ran down the fields like a prairie fire, and what was once a neat encampment was now a blazing mass.

Be sure that we, like the flying soldiers, would soon beat a quick retreat, for we had no desire to be choked with smoke or meet the victorious Scots.

The whole village was now in a great state of consternation, and it seemed as if every resident had joined the English soldiers in this disgraceful flight. Amongst the fugitives was to be seen a parson, who seemed very anxious about some baggage which his servant was carrying. On inquiring who this parson was, I

was informed in a whisper that he was the Rector of Whickham, who had carefully "rifled his house of everything but a few old books and pamphlets and one old cloak, which he had left with an old woman, being the only living Christian in the village, the rest being fled."

The turnpike road leading east of Whickham was now one confused mass of retreating soldiers and terrified villagers, and in the confusion and dust of it all, our picture vanishes and we come back to the unromantic year of 1929.

The fire which burnt up the tents of this retreating English army communicated with a seam of coal which burned it is said for several years with great fury, and at night threw up volcanic flames at different parts of the village and grounds adjoining. Having often read of a stratum of burnt earth, stone and clay, extending from the east end of Whickham to the west and over a hundred yards to the north, I made a kind of survey of the district referred to, beginning at the Coaly Well in the lower part of one of the fields below the church. Here is to be seen a great deal of red material evidently burnt stone or clay, and during the recent coal strike good coal is said to have been obtained near this well, which may have stood here at the time of the encampment, providing water for the men and their horses.

From here I worked on to a field at the west of the village, opposite to the back of the Spoor Memorial Chapel, where there seemed abundant evidence of the ground having badly suffered through fire, and this is supported by the large quantities of red sand found below the surface. Here also coal has been found, and it seems likely that the burning seam of coal would begin about the Coaly Well, travelling up to this point and crossing the road to the Glebe farm. This farm stands near where the old one stood, which one of the

old residents informed me was so damaged by the sinking of part of the hollow burnt-out coal seam upon which it stood that the present new one had to be built.

At several parts of the village workmen, in digging for foundations, have come across red sand, so that it seems this unique underground fire, a kind of "inferno," was for years silently burning under the village, and perhaps under the very homes of the people. Such an underground fire, and its cause, are perhaps things unique in the country.

OLIVER CROMWELL AT WHICKHAM

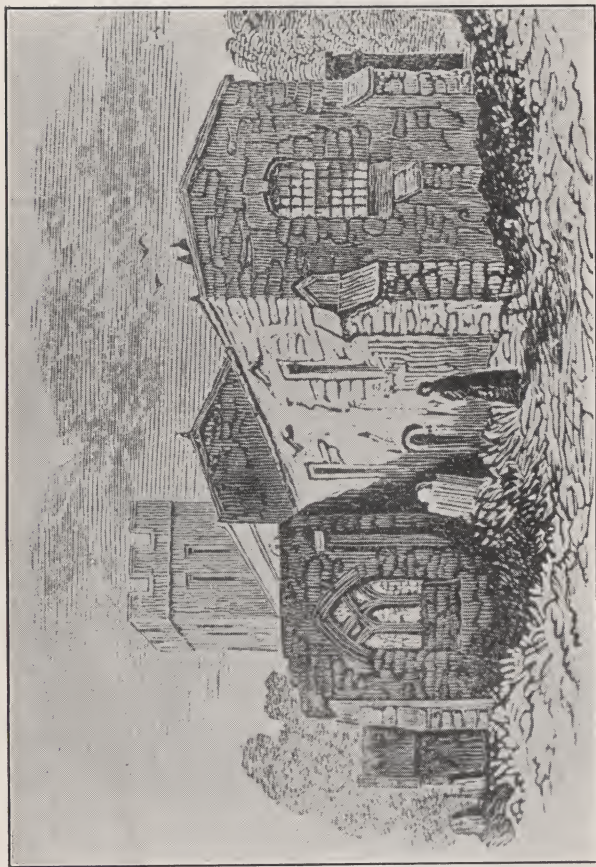
THOSE who happened to pass through the picturesque churchyard of Whickham on the seventh day of September in 1648, would have found their attention drawn to a small and silent group of men who were evidently taking part in a burial. On closer observation it would be seen that they were soldiers, clad in the characteristic uniform of Cromwell's Ironsides, who were committing to the earth the body of one of their comrades who had died either on the march, or while camping in the fields at the north side of the church.

As old times and old memories are ever dear to a true son of the North, I felt, while pondering over the age-worn entry of this man's burial in the parish register, that I would like us to imagine ourselves the interested passers-by in those stormy days of the Civil War.

Here are the words of the brief and, no doubt, hurriedly written entry which supplied the inspiration for the following vision:

"A souldier to Lewetenant-General Cromwell, 7 September, 1648."

It is quite likely if we drew near to the last resting-place of this, as yet, "unknown warrior" we would be astonished at the absence of any officiating minister, as we read that it had been decreed by those in authority "that when any person departed this life, the dead body was to be interred without any religious ceremony, nor were the friends allowed to sing, read, pray, or even to kneel at the grave."



[By courtesy of the Rev. M. H. Huthwaite, M.A.

Wickham Church in the days of Cromwell.

There is, however, a probability that we should find a cleric, without his surplice, which was strictly forbidden, hurriedly reading the burial service, for it is on record that this rule was not always adhered to.

But we are not so much concerned with this detail as we are with the after movements of the burial party. From our position in the churchyard we closely watched these soldiers until they finished their sad task, after which, shouldering their spades, they left the churchyard on the north and entered the fields where the army was encamped. Presently they reappeared, this time without their spades; and they now seemed to be making inquiries of their comrades where the General was to be found, so that they might report to him that the burial had been duly carried out.

Being directed to a certain house near the turnpike to the east of the church, they at once started in this direction. We followed them for about two hundred yards, till they reached a fairly large red-tiled and picturesque stone house, with a well-kept garden in front, surrounded by a low wall, which was entered by a neat gate, evidently the residence of someone of importance in the village. The few natives we passed on our way seemed to have on their faces a look both of fear and anger, as if they by no means welcomed Cromwell and his army to their quiet little village of Whickham.

Arriving at this house, chosen by Cromwell and his officers, we noticed that two musketeers who were on guard opened the garden gate for the burial party, and pointed to the strong wooden front door of the house. This door was opened by a soldier on guard, who informed the members that as the General and his officers were now engaged in prayer, they would have to wait till they were finished. After a fairly long wait they were taken by the same guard into the large front room of the house.

Here at the head of a long table sat Cromwell, "England's strongest man," with his officers seated around engaged in a serious council of war. On being informed by the guard of the business of these soldiers, he left his seat and came towards them, greeting them in his usual harsh voice with such words as these, "Well, my friends, have you decently laid to rest another of our brethren of the Lord's army?" To which we imagine one of the soldiers would answer, "Yes, General, in sorrow we have, as our late comrade may have left a wife and children to mourn his loss." "Wife and children!" replied this stern leader. "Remember that he who is not prepared to forsake wife and children, and all worldly things, is not worthy to be a soldier in the Lord's army."

As he thus expressed himself with fervour and eloquence one could see plainly that he was not asking of his soldiers more than he himself was prepared to do, for had he not left behind his wife and children, to whom he was attached by the strongest bonds of love, as well as his old mother, to whom he was a devoted son, for the cause of the people?

Let us now attempt to describe the kind of person who by his visit here has for ever added historic fame to the ancient village of Whickham. Cromwell appeared to be of middle height and of a somewhat awkward and heavy figure, with keen grey eyes, rough features and skin tanned brown by wind and weather. Though his look was far from being gentle or attractive, there was no mistaking the sincerity of "this great rough heroic life," for one saw by his every movement that behind a rugged exterior there burned an "all-consuming fire." Nevertheless one realized that here was a character from whom it would be dangerous to differ; and none knew this better than these Ironsides who now stood before their stern leader, whom they feared rather than loved.

Cromwell, seemingly satisfied with the report of his men, and no doubt with his own pointed sermon, after bidding them good-day and God-speed, returned to his presidency on the council of war. He disappears from our sight as the guard closes the room door behind him. At the same time we hear the tramp of the soldiers gradually die away down the garden path, and with this fades away our picture of a most stirring time in the history of Whickham.

Before closing this old volume of the parish register, which was our inspiration, we noted the name of another Cromwellian soldier who was buried in this churchyard. This burial took place in 1650 when the army rested here on its return from the victory at Dunbar on September 3rd, though it is not on record that the Protector again awed the rural villagers with his presence. The following are the words of this second entry:

“ Ric. Clayton, a souldier belonging to Coll. Pryde, 31 Sept., 1650.”

The house that has been pictured in the above vision is one known as “ Dockendale Hall,” standing a little off the turnpike, near the entrance to the village from the east.

Tradition, which sometimes speaks truly, tells us that here Cromwell stayed for two days when his army, or some part of it, lay at Whickham on the march to Scotland in 1648. That the identity of the house is not yet an established certainty may be due largely to the reticence of those who, perhaps against their wish, housed the Protector.

Having recently visited this rambling old residence as it stands within its beautiful frame-work of green trees, with its ivy-clad walls, sweet lawn and flowered garden in front, I determined there and then to hold on to this tradition till definitely proved to be false.

As one wandered about this place, taking note of its curiously arranged staircases and rooms, its thick walls, deep cupboards and strong wooden doors, as well as other interesting features, including the room in which it is said the Protector slept, one almost longed to believe that his ghost haunted this old house, and so establish for us the fact that it was here he actually stayed.

Let all who love things romantic believe this until it is clearly shown to be otherwise.

THE CAUSEY, OR TANFIELD, ARCH OF THE GRAND ALLIES

ONE of the most beautiful and romantic spots in the county of Durham is, beyond doubt, the dell of Causey Burn, with that wonderful stone structure spanning the dell known as the Tanfield, or Causey Arch, believed to be the oldest railway viaduct in the world. On a grey autumn afternoon near the end of September, 1927, I again wandered as far as this monument of an interesting past, situated along that largely picturesque wagonway between Marley Hill and Tanfield.

Standing in the bottom of the valley, surrounded by bracken and trees of various species and sizes, each beginning to put on their sober autumn garb, and listening to the little red-tinted burn as it flowed by the walls of rock, I felt both impressed beyond words, and prouder than ever of my own native county.

From this natural carpet of various hues I looked up at the massive arch with its span of a hundred and three feet rising to a height of about sixty feet, where it is crowned and embraced by the kindly arms of its wooded companions; as if seeking to protect it from the storms, in its day of old age and neglect.

As I thus stood impressed, not only with the sweet and quiet restfulness of it all, but also with the sad sight of the dilapidated arch; that inborn love of the romantic past sent me away back in spirit to the early part of the eighteenth century. The vision showed me the same valley though without the arch, and three gentlemen in the dress of the period, who, by the way

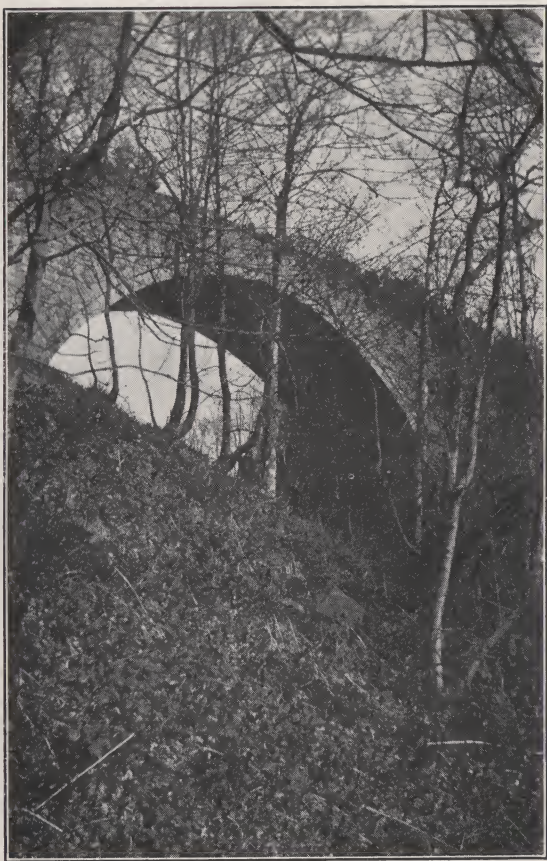
they were reviewing the situation, were evidently bent upon some business of importance. Presently one of them was overheard to remark that to span such a place as this would, if possible, be both a costly and difficult task, and a question whether it would be worth such an outlay.

"I quite agree with you, George," said a second speaker, who had the appearance of a soldier, "but surely we of the Grand Allies are not the people to be thwarted by difficulties. What do you say about this Montagu? Though as you know, Colonel Liddell," replied the person addressed, "I stand second to none in my belief in the powers of our coal alliance, yet we must not be rash and throw money away on useless ventures. However, if after having gone into the whole matter we decide upon erecting the said arch, no doubt our co-partner, George Bowes, will quite agree with commencing the erection as soon as possible."

The three gentlemen were seen to be deeply engaged in conversation, after which one of them was heard to suggest that they should consult at once a local mason called Ralph Wood, who not only had a reputation for bridge building, having just completed a large wooden bridge, but was also his own architect, carefully watching his work to the finish.

After this important decision these three coal magnates, who were none other than George Bowes of Gibside, Colonel Liddell of Ravensworth and the Hon. Charles Montagu, vanish from sight, and though the scene remains the same, this once quiet valley now becomes swarmed with busy workmen. Trees are hewn down, the sides of the valley are dug into, and active preparations are begun for the building of the arch.

Later huge stones and planks of timber begin to arrive, with cranes and other tools necessary for



[By courtesy of Mr. R. Hall

Causey Arch.

builders' work, and now the dell is formed into an outside workshop. The beautiful wild flowers are crushed to death, and the little birds are driven away, their sweet notes being deadened by the sound of the hammer and other noisy tools.

Suddenly all is silence, for the wonderful director of our imagination has carried us forward for about two or more years. The picture we now see is that of a splendidly finished stone bridge of a single span, erected over the dell for the purpose of obtaining a level for the passage of coal wagons. Upon one of the piers of this noble structure the clever mason and architect had fixed a sun-dial bearing the following inscription:

RA. WOOD, MASON, 1727.

To this newly finished bridge now came the same three members of the Grand Alliance whom we had seen at the opening of our vision, accompanied by Mr. Wood, and though it was clearly seen they were congratulating him on his work, which had cost £12,000, yet he seemed to have an anxious look upon his face, as if he had undertaken a task too great for his health.

These visitors, who had evidently come on a tour of inspection, then disappear, and the bridge and the lonely dell are wrapped in silence. It was now borne in upon our imagination that from time to time a man, with a haggard look upon his face, was to be seen prowling about the bridge alone, often at night-time, as if examining the work both above and below.

This wretched person was none other than the poor terrified architect and builder, Ralph Wood, who had received such a shock by the recent falling of his wooden bridge for want of weight, that being filled so much with fear that his new stone erection would

suffer the same fate he could rest neither day nor night.

In our vision this poor man looked as if he had been awakened by a horrible dream ending with a loud crash, and had rushed from his bed expecting to see his bridge in ruins. These sleepless nights and anxious days so distracted the mind of poor Wood, that rather than live to see his second bridge fall he took his own life; and with this imaginary record of the unfortunate builder's tragic end, we draw the curtain before our vision.

As I left this unique Causey Arch, with the September evening mist quickly closing in, it seemed like a massive tombstone to the memory of its ill-fated designer and constructor, and the thoughts of the agony he must have gone through before committing suicide made one feel profoundly sorry that he had been driven to such a terrible act.

There seems to be no reliable information as to how he ended his life. Some say he took poison, while others assert that he threw himself off the bridge into the deep valley below. One of the inhabitants of the district whom I met on this visit actually showed me not only the place where he flung himself over, but also pointed out a huge stone which he had carried over in his fall. Though it is quite possible for him to have gone over the bridge, yet it would take a much greater force than this to carry over such a stone. But what will honest country folk not believe?

He also took care to inform me that he knew of two men who had committed suicide by throwing themselves from the same place. Though I have tried to discover something about the family connections of Ralph Wood, yet there seems to be nothing known about him in the district, except that some believe he came from Durham.

To discover who he was and where he was buried

would be certainly adding a piece of interesting information to our local history, for he has, beyond all question, left behind him one of the most picturesque memorials in the county.

This valuable landmark ought not to be allowed to fall into decay, as it is quickly doing, but steps should quickly be taken to preserve it, not only for its own sake, but as a lasting monument both to that wonderful body of coal magnates known as the Grand Allies, and to its ill-fated builder.

I heard it rumoured at Tanfield that a movement was started in the district for this purpose, but owing to the depression of trade it received little response. One of the natives also expressed the hope that when it is repaired the sun-dial with the inscription upon it will be set up in its original place. This valuable relic is said to be in the possession of a Mrs. Joicey, who resides near, or in, London, having, it is said, been picked up from the bottom of the dell and given to Mr. Joicey, then one of the colliery officials.

Regarding the original purpose of the bridge, I don't think it was ever much used as a wagonway, as we read the colliery it was meant to be used for had the misfortune to be set on fire. Costing £12,000 and a poor human life this erection therefore proved to be a commercial failure. As a stately picture, set in Nature's beautiful woodland frame, it is perhaps unrivalled in our county. Here in lonely grandeur we leave it to tell its pathetic tale to the interested visitor.

A SOLEMN MIDNIGHT PROCESSION FROM GIBSIDE

IN the cosy little kitchen of the Chapel House at Gibside, near the close of last year,¹ I listened with rapt attention to Mrs. Cheesman as she vividly described the removal of two coffins from the vault beneath the chapel, where, in company with five others, they had long rested peaceably in their respective niches.

As such an uncommon incident, which I think has never been fully told, may interest some of our North-country folk, I would like to repeat the story told by this life-long retainer of the family in the hope also that it will become another addition to our local history.

Somewhere near two o'clock on a certain morning in the July of 1928, the inhabitants of the cottages on the estate were aroused by the arrival of seven motor-cars, including two hearses, the lamps lighting up the surrounding woods and making the tall trees stand out like ghosts.

To most people on the estate this midnight procession came as a surprise, only my informant, whose duty it is to look after the family chapel, and the workmen needed to carry out the work, knowing the day and the hour.

Mrs. Cheesman, who closely watched the whole proceedings, declared that she had never seen anything so weird as the playing of the piercing lights upon the outside of this sacred building, both chapel and mausoleum, and one felt that words failed her to fully express the impression stamped upon her mind.

¹ Written in 1928.

In silence the undertaker, who came with the motors from Barnard Castle, descended the steps to the door of the vault, where he was met by some workmen, who had lifted the coffins from the niches and placed them on tressels to be ready for speedy removal.

The solemn moment had now arrived, and in the midst of a silence that could be felt, they were carried from their resting-place by the stalwart workmen, and each placed in a separate motor-hearse.

Slowly and reverently the funeral cortege, bearing with it the remains of John Bowes and his French wife, the Countess of Montalbo, passed out of Gibside, the place which in life had long been their happy home, and in death their united resting-place, until this hour had struck. None who watched the cortege leave the park could possibly be more deeply affected than this faithful old servant, who had spent her long life of eighty-five years on the estate, and had been present at the first funeral of her late master and mistress.

With a wonderful clearness she recalled these solemn offices as they took place in the beautiful chapel. The Countess, who died in France, February, 1874, being a Roman Catholic, was buried according to the rites of her church, in the presence of her bereaved husband, who was accompanied by a large number of sympathetic friends, including Roman Catholic and other gentry of the district. Two priests, to quote her own words, mumbled something over the coffin, after which it was borne to the niche from which it has just been taken.

John Bowes died in October, 1885, and the chapel was filled with people of all classes, who came to show their last tribute of respect to the popular squire of Gibside. When the impressive burial service of the Church of England was concluded, his coffin was placed in the niche next to his wife, so that in death they should not be divided.

It had been long arranged that as soon as the Bowes

Memorial Roman Catholic Church at Barnard Castle was built, their united resting-place should be transferred to the new vault adjoining this church, and now they have bid farewell for ever to Gibside.

The Countess Mrs. Cheesman described as a little plain-looking lady, who often rode about the grounds on a pony carefully led by her husband, every inch an ideal country squire, and very much devoted to his wife.

Speaking of John Bowes, she depicted him as a real gentleman, though somewhat blunt in his manner. Then she dwelt lovingly on the homely life at the Hall, where her late master and mistress appeared at their best, being ideal host and hostess at the gay invitation dinners, where music was supplied by the Marley Hill brass band, and all went "merry as a marriage bell."

But, alas, this has long since gone, and now the mansion, the once splendid banqueting-hall, the conservatory whose show of flowers and trees were perhaps unrivalled in the district; and, indeed, the entire estate with its splendid woods and towering monument, are quickly going to wreck and ruin. Will anyone arise to save them?

As this old lady thus deplored the departed glories of this still beautiful Gibside, one could easily see that it was her keen sense of the passing away of what might have been preserved, that was the saddest feeling in the eventide of her life.

The daylight had been replaced by black darkness during our talk by the fireside, and one suddenly awakened to the fact that Gibside was an ugly place in the dark. Seeing my reluctance to set out through the thickly set trees, this brave "granny," as she is known on the estate, sought her electric flash-lamp and led me safely through the trees and on to the safe path.

THE ROMANCE OF THE SECOND- HAND BOOKSTALL

If asked by anyone how much I paid for several of my most prized books, and where they came from, I should answer without a moment's hesitation, from a penny up to sixpence, and off the second-hand bookstall—happy hunting ground for all real book-lovers. To this let me add that to such favoured mortals there is no greater pleasure than to roam at leisure over the resting-places of some of our master-spirits, who have left their immortal souls behind them.

No one but the honest *litterateur* can realize the joy experienced on the discovery, sometimes amongst a heap of utter rubbish, of what to me has long been a gem of priceless value. After rescuing this book from its sad companions, and blowing off the dust, I eagerly ask the price, and am informed by the business-like dealer that all these here are two for fivepence or threepence each. The price asked for this masterpiece being handed to one who seemed glad to get rid of some more of his lumber, I carefully put into my pocket, as it is somewhat dilapidated, and determine that never again, if I can help it, should it fall into such a low state.

Yes, in many cases the books have been so badly damaged that the gum-pot has to be used, for the binding as well as for the leaves. This I gladly do, and like a good physician bind up the wounds of this dead, yet ever living soul, for as Milton has said: "A good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life

beyond life." When this patching and mending is done, I give the rescued soul a prominent position in my book-case, and not only rejoice over a newly-discovered book, but also feel something of a saviour who has recovered a "master-spirit" from destruction. The above is a faithful record of the discovery of many of my much loved books, and no doubt the experience of many others.

I never pass one of these harbours of refuge for cast-off books without spending what time I have to spare in looking out for some treasure or other, and even in a few of the dirtiest second-hand furniture shops, I have unearthed more than one valuable book. But this is only part of the romance of our quest.

Though there are a fair sprinkling of second-hand bookstalls about Newcastle, yet the most popular hunting ground for brethren of the cult is the Grainger Market. This cult, like that of Freemasonry, has its special sign, detected only by the brethren themselves; and this sign is seen in the earnest expression of the brother, as with quick eye he scans the books, his hands at the same time moving amongst them, like a man playing a piano. To this there is sometimes added a touch of restless anxiety lest someone will pick up the very book he may be looking for. Again, there is a wonderful *esprit de corps* peculiar to the book-lover, which, in the presence of a collection of not new, but old books, makes strangers into friends.

As I look over my own book-case, it seems like a kind of autobiography, for it contains copies of second-hand books picked up over a period of many years and in various places. These, first copies of our great masters in "the world of books," look down from their shelves like ghosts of the past, and I seem to feel the romance of it all, such as no new books will ever give, or no up-to-date book-shop, however

flash it may be. Never having a great deal of money to spare over books, I can safely say that the second-hand bookstall has provided me at a cheap price with every first copy of the masters of literature that I possess. Though in some cases I have got new copies, yet I can never find the heart to turn off the old ones; for dear to the bookworm are old associations and old memories of book-hunting days.

Further, there always seems to me something pathetic in rows of second-hand books, and one feels that if they could speak, "what tales they could unfold"—tales of hard-working authors—and of the fine private libraries, where, for long, they were sheltered in safety and loved by their owners, who were almost afraid to soil them. Death, however, overtakes their owners and the volumes are thrown out into the cold world. One has only to look at the names and book-plates in some of them to see that they spell the death or downfall of members of wealthy families. Here they lie mixed up with all kinds of company—a living witness to the insecurity of all earthly things. Is there no romance or poetry, therefore, in the sight of the second-hand bookstall? There may even be tears in these cast off "Echoes of Other Days."

THE CONVENT OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW AT NEWCASTLE

IN hunting up information regarding this convent—perhaps the only pre-Reformation convent in Newcastle—I was especially impressed with two things: first, the number of royal, as well as lesser notable people, that have been associated with it; and, secondly, the events of national and local interest which such a search brings before our minds.

The first notable name we meet with is that of Hilton, or Hylton, one of the members of that distinguished North-country family whose residence has been Hylton Castle, Sunderland, from the time of King Athelstan, A.D. 925, down to the year 1739. Of that ancient stronghold of the North all that now remains is the imposing gateway.

Barons of Hylton have ever been ready to fight their country's battles, and one of them lost a princely fortune in the cause of the unfortunate King Charles I.

To this family belongs that weird story of "The Cauld Lad of Hylton," familiar to all students of local lore.

According to Brand, one of the most reliable of our historians, there exists "a manuscript in the Bodleian Library at Oxford in which it is written that this convent owed its origin to an ancient Baron of Hylton." Such an important statement, coming from the source that it does, naturally makes one desirous to discover the name of this particular Baron who so concerned himself with the religious life of Newcastle.

After a fair amount of research, I have been led to the conclusion that there is no evidence in this direction. The only alternative now left to us is to see if there existed a religiously inclined Baron before the Norman Conquest—as this convent is believed to be pre-Norman—and to assume that he may have been the man.

Coming across a "History of Hartlepool," by Sir C. Sharp, it was my good fortune to meet with a pious member of the family. In this book we read that one, "Adam Hylton, living in the time of King Athelstan, gave to the Monastery of Hartlepool a silver crucifix, and caused his arms to be engraven on it." Using this piece of information as a cue, though very remote, we can but speculate on the possibility of this Adam extending his religious zeal as far as Newcastle.

Further on we find Brand getting a bit more definite, when he states that "in 1086 mention is made of a small Benedictine Nunnery at Newcastle-upon-Tyne." He then proceeds to inform us that "after Malcolm, King of Scotland, was slain at Alnwick, November 13th, 1093, Agas, the mother of his wife, Queen Margaret, and her sister Christian, retired here and took the sacred veil."

In these few words we find ourselves carried away to Malcolm's Cross at Alnwick, which marks the place where this impetuous king was slain, and on to these days of continual warfare, between Scotch and English.

Despite the prayers of his saintly queen, Malcolm raised an army for his fifth and last invasion of Northumberland, which resulted not only in his own death by treachery, but that of his eldest son and the best of his knights.

When the sad news of the death of her husband was brought to the Queen as she lay dying of consumption

in Edinburgh Castle, she took it as but part of the chastisement needed before she was found at all worthy to meet her Lord.

The death-bed scene of the good Queen of Malcolm Canmore is one of the most touching incidents to be found in the whole of Scotland's romantic history, and her words then uttered are some of the most saintly.

She is said to have done much to introduce civilization and the beginnings of refinement into Scotland, and on account of the part she took in introducing the Roman method was afterwards canonized as St. Margaret.

After the body of this queen had been laid to rest, and the bodies of her husband and eldest son conveyed to Tynemouth for burial, the sorrow-stricken mother with her daughter, members of a Saxon royal family, left Edinburgh to seek refuge in this convent by the Tyne, and amongst their own people.

They would, no doubt, travel on palfreys along the Great North Road, accompanied by their faithful servants, resting overnight at some country houses or religious hostels until they reached Newcastle. What a real joy it would be to the Mother Superior to welcome these two royal ladies, and to make every preparation for their comfort.

That this institution, which had grown from small beginnings, was one of influence and standing in the country, seems to be shown by these ladies of royal blood selecting it as their harbour of rest from scenes of bloodshed and strife.

It also found favour with David, King of Scotland, who, when residing in Newcastle, showed his appreciation of the good work done by the endowment of valuable lands, in consequence of which he has been wrongly mentioned as the founder of St. Bartholomew's. Another royal benefactor was the English

king, Henry I, who because of his gifts was also reputed to be the original founder.

In 1143 Stella was granted by the Bishop of Durham "to God and St. Bartholomew and the Nuns of Newcastle," and in 1448 there was further added, by another Bishop, the Chapel of St. Edmund's Hospital in Gateshead, now Holy Trinity Church.

The Nuns' Moor was also given to them, though the land now known by this name is only a portion of what they possessed.

Such a wealthy and influential institution as this was certain to have buildings in proportion; and suitable for the large number of inmates, which in its best day is said to have numbered over a thousand.

The house, which is believed to have stood in a beautifully wooded park, is also thought to have been one of the best architectural buildings in the town. Its magnificent arched doorway, forming the grand entrance, or main gate, situated near the Newgate Street end of Nuns' Lane, existed down to the latter part of the eighteenth century.

The site of the convent with the grounds is largely covered by the Grainger Market, though it extended east towards Grey Street.

When the monasteries were suppressed in 1539, for some reason or other letters patent were granted to this house, permitting it to continue its work for a little longer, though with a sadly reduced number of nuns.

The fatal blow, however, was not long in falling upon this once powerful and highly favoured convent, for we read that "on January 13th, 1540, Dame Agnes Lawson and nine other inmates surrendered the ancient nunnery."

The lands at Stella were purchased by one of the Tempests of Newcastle, and upon the foundation of the nunnery he built Stella Hall, which afterwards

became the residence of the late Joseph Cowen, M.P. It is still in the possession of the family.

Gateshead lands and revenues belonging to St. Edmund's Hospital, after their surrender to the Crown, suffered a like fate; part of this estate becoming the possession of William Riddell, a member of an influential North-country family. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth he built on it the mansion known as Gateshead House. From this family the land with the house passed into the hands of the Claverings, who were well known to be staunch Catholics. It is believed that it was owing to their faith that the mob burned this house to the ground when the Duke of Cumberland passed through Gateshead on April 16th, 1746, on his way to quell the last Jacobite rebellion on Culloden Moor.

It is pleasing to learn that some of this convent's land at Gateshead was put to a benevolent use in 1610 by King James I. With the surrendered lands and revenues of St. Edmund's Hospital, this monarch, by letters patent it is stated, founded the hospital in Gateshead called "King James's Hospital," providing an old age pension for upwards of fifty men.

That part of the Newcastle Moor belonging to St. Bartholomew's became the possession of the Brandlings of Gosforth, who sold it in 1650 to the Corporation. A portion of it is now Nuns' Moor Park.

Though there is nothing remaining of the buildings of this ancient religious institution, perhaps the oldest in the town, yet in the old chapel of St. Edmund's Hospital, Gateshead, now restored as Holy Trinity Church, we have an actual connecting link with its past life, a living page out of its wonderful history.

In addition to this valuable link and the above mentioned hospital, we have the Nuns' Moor Park, as well as the names of streets and lanes, all lending their

voice to proclaim the immortal memory of the Convent of St. Bartholomew.

Apart from this, I don't think there is a history of any of our religious houses whose pages bring before us more historical characters or important events, or that are so full of the romance of "the days that are gone." As a subject of historic suggestiveness, it is a priceless mine of wealth.

DAME DOROTHY LAWSON, THE CATHOLIC LADY OF ST. ANTHONY'S

MUCH as I love the beautiful reaches of our noble river where it flows peacefully and clearly through meadow and woodland, yet I have nevertheless a warm side for that murky portion which runs the gauntlet of fire and smoke, as it journeys outward to the sea.

On a certain fine day quite recently I took a riverside stroll as far as St. Anthony's, on the north shore, about three miles seaward from Newcastle Quay: discovering also that it was one of the least smoky and noisy of this industrial portion. Not only was there still some green grass left on the steep banks of the river, but it was pleasing to see the opposite side equally fortunate.

Naturally the grass here was somewhat thin, of a faded green, and without the shadow of the trees of a former day; but still, one felt grateful that in spite of smoke and fumes, so much remained of nature's carpet.

Having nothing particular to do for the moment, I sat down on the grass to watch the ferry-boat, and listen to the music of the oars as it neared the landing-place at my feet, feeling at the same time for my notebook, as this place of St. Anthony's seemed to suggest things of a bygone day.

For instance, looking up the bank from this grassy side, with the ever-fascinating scene of the passing of ships, my eye rested on the old and broken down Hall

of St. Anthony's, said at one time to have been the residence of the James family, a member of which became the first Lord Northbourne.

Interested by the pathetic sight of this stately ruin of a one-time noble mansion, I at once wondered if it stood upon, or near, the site of the beautiful riverside residence of a certain Catholic lady known as Dame Dorothy Lawson, about whose good works one had read so much in our North-country history.

The very name of this historical personage called up in me that spirit of romance, which is never, I am happy to say, far distant, and somehow the sound of the oars caught up that spell.

The following incident suggested by this ferry-boat, though nowhere writ in our local history, yet is, I have no doubt, a representation of what would actually happen again and again somewhere near the spot.

When by a few notes in my book I had, so to speak, photographed my picture, and with the sound of the plashing of oars still fresh, though now seeming to come from a phantom boat, with its ghostly crew, I returned home and wrote thus:

It was during those unhappy days of the seventeenth century when, to quote the words of J. R. Green, "every Papist seemed to Protestant eyes an enemy at home."

Had we been hiding amongst some trees on the bank of the river at St. Anthony's on a dark evening about the year 1625, we would have pricked up our ears at the sound of the plashing oars of a boat making quickly for the shore.

As we sought to penetrate through the darkness we saw a fairly large boat land dangerously near our hiding-place. Not a word was spoken as the passengers stepped on to the shore; but by mute signs they followed someone carrying a dark lantern, and having

a sword by his side, who in a secret place had awaited their arrival.

We now have an opportunity of observing the passengers as they pass close by the trees which supply our shelter; and men can see a good deal even in the dark, if the objects are near, and their curiosity high. That two or three of them were men of the higher rank of society was clearly indicated, both by their dress and noble bearing, as well as the sword by their side. The others were evidently belonging to the lower ranks, probably artisans and sailors. Be this as it may they were all seriously bent on an all-important errand, which, largely due to its dangerous risks, knew no distinctions of class or dress.

After all had been safely landed, the boatman pulled the boat a short distance up the river, keeping close to the shore for fear of observation, where it would no doubt await their return.

We will continue the work of a spy, and follow this party as they are led by their guide up to a stately mansion standing high up the river-bank, which everybody in the district knew well was the home of that beloved lady, Dame Lawson, whose kind heart never refused the needy.

Reaching one of the doors of the garden wall, they were met by someone seemingly in a great state of excitement, who urged them to be quick and get inside and the door locked. This travel-stained horseman told them that, having been suspected as he rode on the main turnpike, he dismounted and walked by the riverside. He was clearly a priest in the disguise of an ordinary gentleman, for all, as if by instinct, forgot their code of silence by exclaiming in such words as these, "Thank God, Father, you are safe."

Producing a key the guide quickly opened the door leading into the garden with its waving trees, and rushing everyone inside, we heard the click of the lock.

With the turn of this key ends our picture, perhaps only too true, of these troublesome days, which we all trust may never more return to our beloved country.

The Hall which these secret worshippers would enter after passing through the garden was built by this good lady in 1620, after leaving Heaton on the death of her husband. It has been described by the historian as "a seat most commodious for pleasure in all commodities by the flowing and ebbing of the renowned and rich River Tyne." The reason why she chose this place so near the river is said to be twofold: first because it was holy, being dedicated to St. Anthony, and secondly, it was more private than Heaton.

So great was her devotion to the proscribed faith, and her sympathy for her fellow Catholics of all nations, that knowing full well the risk she was running, she not only placed the picture of St. Anthony in a tree near the river, but also had the sacred name of Jesus, in large letters, painted on the house wall facing the river. These she said would not only be a comfort and guidance for seamen, but would also show them that here was a Catholic home where they might fly for spiritual freedom.

The natural result was that her house, as well as those of all known Catholics, was strictly watched by the authorities, to see they harboured no priests, nor held religious services. This official spying was by no means vain, for we read that two of her chaplains were arrested and thrown into prison for officiating at Mass in her private chapel. One of them seems to have been in ill-health at the time, and without any thought of her own safety, she ventured to visit him in gaol, and to plead with the magistrates that for the sake of his health he might enjoy the liberty of the town.

No doubt the local authorities would be obliged to make some arrests partly to show that they were

doing their duty; and also that they might shield this lady herself, so much was she beloved and respected by all classes of the community.

She therefore continued to hold services in her beautiful chapel, though contrary to the strict laws in force, which we are even told were winked at by the magistrates, who would no doubt also take into consideration, both the high social position of her family, as well as her great wealth. The altar of her chapel was decorated after the fashion in Catholic countries.

Nevertheless she had for some years been running no little risks, for others than generous local magistrates had long had their eyes on St. Anthony's refuge for Catholics, with its influential law-breaker. In a proclamation issued by Bishop Neale of Durham to the Privy Council, shortly after her death, it was stated that too much tolerance was shown to the Catholics on the Tyne, and the name of Mistress Lawson was mentioned in company with the names of other prominent local adherents of this faith, including Sir Robert Hodgson of Hebburn.

The death of this saintly lady of St. Anthony's, on the 2nd April, 1632, came as a great shock to the whole district, where so many partook of her charity and benevolence; and to none more than those to whom, at her own risk, she gave the opportunity to worship according to the faith of their fathers.

So much indeed was the name of Dame Dorothy Lawson esteemed by those in authority, that she was given a civic funeral, attended by the magistrates and aldermen, as well as the whole glory of the town. These local magnates who had shown such tolerance towards this lady, in spite of the strict laws, were accompanied not only by the gentry of the district, but also those hundreds of poor people who mourned the loss of a friend, ever ready to help them in times of need.

Her body was brought from the Hall by boat, accompanied by other boats and barges, and carried up to the door of All Saints' Church. Here it was delivered solemnly to those of her own faith, and with all Catholic ceremony laid in the grave, amidst scenes of the deepest sorrow.

Had her beautiful mansion by the river with its "neat and rich chapel" not fallen a victim to the excesses of civil war not many years after her death, no doubt it would have been held in veneration by local Catholics.

Dorothy Lawson was one of the Constables, an ancient, wealthy Yorkshire family, her husband being one of the Lawsons formerly of Cramlington. From their large family, as we are informed by her biographer Richardson, were descended the Swinburnes, Tempests, Silvertops, in addition to other noted English families.

ECHOES OF TRAGEDY



WINTER'S STOB, A GRUESOME NORTHUMBRIAN LANDMARK

"In that drear spot, grim Desolation's lair,
No sweet remains of life encheers the sight."

—H. KIRKE WHITE.

ON the afternoon of the "Glorious Twelfth" of our year of grace 1927, and blessed with delightfully sunny weather, a prospecting party of four left Gosforth in a private motor en route for the bleak Northumbrian moors. Being without guns and ammunition, it was quite evident that we were not bent either on killing poor birds, or wasting powder and shot. This being a new venture for most, if not all of us, shall we not say that we arrived rather with sharpened intellects, eager to take in whatever was worthy of note in this wonderful land of the North, and more specially regarding the principal object of our journey.

Passing by the beautiful seat of the Riddleys at Blagdon Park, we caught sight of the Cale Cross which formerly stood near the Sandhill, Newcastle, surely an interesting voice from the past for those who have ears to hear! From here we sped on through the charming Plessey Woods and away on through Stannington, Morpeth, Mitford, the lovely valley of the Wansbeck, and other pleasant places without number: our car taking the hills and valleys in right good style. Soon we found ourselves passing through heavy showers of rain.

As if to complete the dreariness of the scene, peal after peal of thunder rolled mournfully across the moors, which, with the mist and rain, certainly

produced the right kind of atmosphere for the gibbet, as it appeared against the sky on the rising ground in front. It lies south-east of Elsdon, on a spot known as Steng Cross, an ancient boundary stone. On reaching the gibbet, which stands in a slightly-rising field, about a stone's-throw from the road, three of our party got out to make a closer inspection of this ghastly reminder of human crime. From the arm of the pole, which we guessed to be about twenty-six feet high, there hung, not a human head, but an exceedingly ugly representation in wood. This was so much worn by weather and age that it was now little more than a mere wooden block. Suspended by a hook and staple, it had just sufficient play to produce that unearthly creaking noise, which wouldn't be pleasant to hear passing on a dark night. We had no fancy to leave our initials on the gibbet, as we saw that many visitors had done. Before going back to our car, we took note of a large stone, hollowed out in the centre, which we assumed to be the base of the old Steng Cross. As if to add still more gloominess to this gruesome voice from the past, the clouds became blacker, and the thunder increased.

Though the history of this gibbet has been told again and again, let me attempt to tell it in my own way, helped by the dreary inspiration of this first visit. Let us go back in imagination to the year 1791, to the place of a few houses, called the Raw, which is within sight of Steng Cross, and where stood one of the old peels of which the county is so rich. This is known as Haws Peel. In a portion of what remained of the peel house lived an old woman named Margaret Crozier, who kept a small general shop. It is Monday night, August 28th, and the loneliness of Margaret was being relieved by the cheerful company of two young women friends who have come to have a chat with her before bed-time. On leaving the house they were

startled by hearing the furious barking of some dogs around a pile of hay which stood near. Not liking this, for they knew that dogs don't bark on a dark night for nothing, they turned back to remind their old friend to be sure and bolt her door for safety. To this advice she laughingly replied that "she had naething to fear, as nae doubt ane of Bessie's sweet-hearts was no far off waiting to see her." Bessie was the name of one of the two young women.

On the following morning, when a woman customer went to make a purchase, she noticed some thread and other small things lying on the ground near the door. Suspecting something wrong, she hurried away to inform some of the neighbours, who remembered that they had not yet seen old Margaret. Together they hastened back to the little shop. Opening the door, they were horrified by seeing the dead body of their neighbour lying on the bed. Though her throat was cut, it was seen on a closer examination that it didn't look deep enough to cause death. It was further noticed that a handkerchief was tied very tightly round the throat, as if death had been finally brought about by strangulation. The palm of one of her hands was terribly lacerated, as if the poor old woman had fought hard for her life. To add more horror to this heart-rending discovery, a blood-stained gully-knife was found among the bed-clothes, the murderers having forgotten it in their hurry to get away before being observed. The shop had been rifled and many of the goods stolen, though it was found afterwards that the plunderers had been disappointed in not finding the money which they heard old Margaret possessed.

No time was wasted in setting a keen investigation on foot, the entire district being thrown at once into excitement, and a reward offered for the discovery of the guilty person or persons. Notes were compared regarding any doubtful characters lately seen in the

neighbourhood; and it was the observation of two intelligent boys which gave the clue ending in the arrest of the murderers. These boys had taken special notice of a tall and powerful-looking man, accompanied by two women, whom they had seen resting and taking their meal in a sheepfold overlooking the scene of the murder. Not liking the look of these persons, they kept a close watch upon their movements, one boy observing not only the kind of boots worn by the man, but also the number of nails in the soles.

This boy at the same time got his eye on the gully-knife used by the man to cut up the food, the haft of which he saw was bound with an iron band to prevent it from splitting. The cue to the direction which these people took on flying from the place was given by the discovery on the ground of some stolen raisins and peas, which dropped from the back of the ass carrying their plunder. The local constables on horseback at once set out in this direction, which led towards Tyneside, arresting the man near Horsley; the women being arrested later on. They all belonged to a tribe of gipsies, vendors of crockery and tin-work.

The name of the man was William Winter, who was recognized as a most desperate character, recently returned from transportation, whose father and brother had both been hanged on a former year. He was nearly six feet high, strongly built, and of a dark complexion, his long black hair being tied up behind. The two women, who were sisters, Jane and Eleanor Clark, were also the children of a father who had been hanged. The prisoners were first brought to Mitford for examination, and when Winter was questioned about the marks of blood on his shirt, he replied that they were the result of a fight with another of his tribe. Mr. R. Mitford, however, refused to accept this explanation, adding that in a fight a man would remove his shirt. From here they were committed, on Sep-

tember 3rd, 1791, to the county gaol at Morpeth, where they remained till the following August, the assizes being then only held once a year. The trial, which took place in the Moot Hall, Newcastle, lasted nearly sixteen hours, considered in those days to be very lengthy. The strongest evidence was furnished by the production of the blood-stained gully-knife, which was recognized by one of the boys as being the same as that he had seen in the possession of Winter. The footmarks found near the house of the murdered woman also corresponded to the boy's description of this man's boots. One of the two friends last with Mrs. Crozier recognized a night-cap in possession of one of the women prisoners which she had herself made for her old friend.

The three prisoners were found guilty and sentenced to be executed, the body of the man to be afterwards hanged in chains on a gibbet within sight of the scene of the murder, and those of the women to be sent to the Surgeon's Hall for dissection. On Friday morning, August 10th, 1792, they were all hanged at the Westgate, and though Winter acknowledged his guilt, the women pleaded their innocence.

The body of Winter, after hanging with his fellow-prisoners for the usual time, was put in a long cart and conveyed northward for its last exposure on a gibbet at Steng Cross, and though so horrible a spectacle, it is said that thousands had turned up to witness it. So heavy was the body of this massive man that it was found necessary to borrow a set of shear legs to hoist it into its place on the arm. When the morbid crowd had dispersed, this ghastly figure was left to mark the sky, for long a terror to all passers-by.

It is said that when decay set in horses could not be urged to pass the place, and that when, in course of time, the whitened remains dropped by pieces to the ground, they were buried by the neighbouring shep-

herds. When no vestige of the mortal remains were to be seen of this man who had paid the terrible penalty of his crime, a wooden figure bearing, we are told, some resemblance to the human form was hung in its place. This in time falling to pieces, another and still ruder one was suspended, which also went the same way as its predecessor, though the upright pole, which was given the name of "Winter's Stob," long remained standing. However, time and exposure, sure destroyers of most things, brought the last original reminder of this crime to the ground. Its final disappearance was no doubt hastened by the superstitious rustics of the district, who believed that the toothache could be cured by rubbing the tooth with chips from the famous gibbet, and it is stated that pilgrimages used to be made to this uncanny spot for pieces of the magic wood.

Somewhere about 1867 Sir Walter Trevelyan, of Wallington Hall, caused a new gibbet to be erected to perpetuate the hanging in chains of Winter on this spot. It was stained and varnished, and suspended from the arm was a wooden imitation of a man's head, said by the historian to be of forbidding countenance and painted in most ghastly colours. So far as I know to the contrary, this storm-beaten gibbet with its ugly block for a head is the same erection.

I hope that those who may read this, of necessity, sordid article, will pay a visit to this moorland landmark, if only to get a sight of those infinite moors, and to inhale their bracing air.

THE MURDER OF DR. STIRLING AT ROWLANDS GILL

"Murder most foul, as in the best it is,
But this the most foul."

—*Hamlet.*

THE golden sun of a beautiful evening in July was gently spreading its gilded mantle on the little ruined hospital at Friarside as it stood in mournful silence in the pleasant valley of the Derwent. Looking towards the east we see towering before us, like a wall, the glorious woods of the Gibside estate, above which points the Bowes Column of Liberty, a prominent landmark for many miles around the surrounding country. Directly in front of us, still looking easterly, a viaduct crosses the road and river, which, though a neat structure as these things go, both mars the perfection of the scene and hides from our view much of the woods, as well as the stone bridge which crosses the river. Even after this has been said, we must admit that we now find ourselves in one of the most picturesque parts of the Derwent valley.

However, I have not come here on this particular evening to dilate on the charms of the scenery all around and about me, tempting though this may be. Rather my errand is a sad one, and even the little choristers of the trees seem to have a touch of melancholy in their notes, and to sympathize with the object of my visit; for I am here on a pilgrimage to view from a little distance the spot where, on November 1st, 1855, was committed one of the most brutal murders to be found in the records of local crime.

Early in the afternoon it was my good fortune to be taken to the old Toll House at Rowlands Gill and there be introduced to Mr. George Robinson, a fine type of the old Victorians. Here was the very person and perhaps the only one living that would be able to confirm or correct the information I had already gathered regarding this murder.

After eighty-five years he still recalls, with no little horror, the details of this barbarous crime, and there passed over his face the look as of the sadness of a "dreaded memory," as he said that never so long as he lived will he forget, when a boy of fourteen, he saw the body of the poor young doctor as it lay in the deep hollow of the wood. His brother Joseph, he further added, who was working in a field close by, heard the shot fired that brought the doctor to the ground.

After I had listened with interest to Mr. Robinson's story, and compared and corrected the notes already collected, another villager, a Mr. Smith, after literally compelling me to have tea with him, kindly proposed a visit to the scene of the murder. When we came to where "Smailes Lane," now "Stirling Lane," takes a quick turn, he pointed out the spot where the bushes stood from behind which the doctor was shot. Many of the trees are now gone from this part of the wood, the remaining portion of which is fenced off from the road. As the evening was now quickly advancing my hospitable guide, who had come almost to the bridge already mentioned, drowned all expressions of thanks by a hearty "good night," and hand-shake which only a true North-countryman knows how to give to a stranger.

Crossing the bridge and taking the path to the right directly opposite the entry into the Gibside woods, I walked some little distance along a delightfully shaded road, till I found myself almost opposite the remaining

portion of the "murder wood," and with the little ruined hospital in a field above towards the west.

Here in the midst of the peaceful surroundings, already very briefly sketched, I sought to visualize the painful tragedy by piecing together the fragments I had been able to glean. These are now written down for all whom they may interest, though it must be freely admitted that so much of the mysterious and traditional has been interwoven by time around this historic murder, that it is difficult always to separate the truth from village tales, touched with superstition.

Mr. Robert Stirling, who had recently been appointed assistant surgeon to Dr. Watson of the Hall, Burnopfield, somewhat surprised the doctor by not putting in his usual daily appearance at the surgery on the Thursday. As he did not turn up the next day, it is said that Dr. Watson thought that, for some reason or other, he had gone on a visit to his home in Scotland, and therefore did not at once concern himself about his absence.

However, the matter now assumed a very serious turn by the appearance of the assistant's parents from Scotland, demanding an instant search for their son's body, as his mother, whom we are told, not only dreamt that her son had been murdered in the woods, but also declared she could identify the faces of the two murderers she had seen in her dream.

The hue and cry was at once raised, and now all that were able began a ceaseless search for the young doctor, who, during the short time he had been in the district, had made himself popular, both by his affable manner as well as his recognized ability. On the Tuesday following, the whole district was horrified by the news that his body had been discovered hidden among the bushes some distance from Smailes Lane. He was returning to Burnopfield about midday on this fatal Thursday of the 1st of November, after his

usual visit to his patients, and had just come to the quick turn in the lane, when, according to the accepted evidence, he was shot down by someone lurking behind the bushes. Some affirm that he was on horseback when he was shot, while others just as strongly declare that he was on foot. The shot not proving fatal, his cowardly assailants rushed out upon their unfortunate victim, and with the butt end of their gun most brutally battered him about the head and face until they were sure of his death for "dead men tell no tales." While busy with their devilish work these men kept clapping their hands and shouting, and by thus imitating setting dogs on to the game, drown all his cries for help.

A farmer working at the time in a field on the opposite side of the river testified to hearing this clapping and shouting, which being a common occurrence, he took no notice of. Having robbed the murdered man of the little money which, to their disappointment, he possessed, his watch, his ring, and his surgical instruments, they trailed his body away from the footpath, and threw it into the steep declivity where it was discovered, it is said, by his father. Mr. Robinson, who shortly afterwards came on the scene, noticed that his hands were tightly clasped together and filled with grass, as if he had undergone a terrible struggle for life.

Now was asked the question—why did these ruffians, whoever they were, mark the young doctor? He had not been long enough in the district to make any enemies, and he was not possessed of any wealth. Surely he had been mistaken for someone else! As soon as it became known that Mr. John Errington, farmer and innkeeper, who kept the Bute Arms at High Spen, was expected to pass down Smailes Lane about noon this day to pay his rent to Mr. John Bowes at the Hall, Gibside, it was concluded that he was the

man they were waiting for. We are told that he so much resembled the doctor in general appearance that the men, with their vision partly obscured by the bushes, feeling sure of their man, fired, and so the doctor's assistant received the bullet meant for the farmer and innkeeper.

So great was the shock to Mr. Errington when he heard of his own narrow escape from the fate which befell the doctor, it is told of him that it was many months before he could be persuaded to venture out of doors, and more especially after dusk. I was also informed that not being at any time a robust man, he never really recovered from the nervous shock, dying at a comparatively early age.

Now began, in dead earnest, the search for the perpetrators of this daring crime, and large rewards were offered for their discovery. Mrs. Stirling, according to the village tradition, held firmly to her dream, and from the men brought before her recognized the faces of the two men who figured in her dream, who were accordingly apprehended, though for my own part I should certainly not vouch for the truth of this story. Be this as it may, two men were arrested on suspicion, one named John Kane (or Cain), known as "Whisky Jack," who kept an illicit still in the vicinity of Smailes Lane, and the other, Richard Rayne, a blacksmith of Winlaton. These men were, therefore, brought up at the Durham Spring Assizes of 1856, but the evidence not being considered at all convincing, they were remanded to the Summer Assizes in the July of the same year.

After a protracted trial, followed by the keenest interest, such a variety of perplexing circumstantial evidence was adduced on behalf of the prosecution that a verdict of not guilty was returned. I was further informed, though how far true I could not say, that the "not guilty" verdict was largely due to the

persistence of a juryman Quaker, who, when all the jury but himself found the prisoners guilty, firmly declared that "there was a long chain of evidence, but not one sound link."

Nevertheless in spite of this verdict, there still exists in the district a kind of suspicion that these two men were the right ones, and that the only juryman mistaken was the Quaker; and I heard it even whispered that he was bribed. On the other hand, there are those who hold that the wrong men were charged; and some of the old people living can remember hearing their elders say with bated breath that it was only fear of their own lives which kept them from revealing the real murderers, for it is as well known who murdered the doctor "as a ha'penny cake is a ha'penny."

The remains of this promising young surgeon of twenty-five years were laid to rest in the midst of the deepest sorrow in the beautiful churchyard at Tanfield, and his last resting-place is marked by a memorial stone erected by his bereaved parents, which is to be seen on the right of the main entrance to the churchyard. With him sleeps till that "Great Day," the secret of this "murder most foul."

THE MYSTERIOUS MURDER AT STREETGATE

THE annual flower-show had just been successfully held in the midst of that rich scenery which is so characteristic of the Ravensworth estate, and much more so in the month of August, 1865, and after the show a dance was held in the marquee, which was pitched in a field near to the Marquis of Granby Inn. In right good style the lads and lasses of Streetgate and from the neighbouring villages were stepping out to the music of the band, and even the hanging oil lamps were swaying to this joyous rhythm. All who have witnessed a country dance in a lighted marquee, with the rays of light playing on the green sward outside, as if wishing to join in the merriment, have seen one of the most picturesque sights of rural life.

Sure I am that this marquee ball at Streetgate would quite come up to the above description, and according to those few living who were present, all went merry as a marriage bell. Little did they think that not only would this be their last flower-show dance at Streetgate, but that before the dawn of another day one more soul from their midst would have "sped its flight."

While these dancers were engaging themselves to the full, loud discordant notes were heard coming from the kitchen of the "Marquis of Granby," to the annoyance of the much respected innkeeper, William Laidman, after whom this inn was locally known as "Bill of the Bank." Here a group of men, no doubt all fired with drink, were seen engaged in a fierce

quarrel, and loud and angry threats were overheard, the worst being against one named Joseph Leybourne. It is believed that this fierce quarrel originated over Leybourne taking the part of a young farm servant from Hexham named Nixon against a notorious character, and wandering cobbler called Jack Bee. It is also believed that among this gang of drunken brawlers there were some of the men servants engaged as outside hands at Ravensworth Castle.

This deadly feud continued until closing time, which seems to have been extended on the occasion of the show, for, according to the evidence given by the woman who lived next door to the inn, they came out about two on the Tuesday morning uttering loud threats and curses. A savage voice was heard above them all, swearing that he would do for Leybourne, that he would "knock his soul out," but unfortunately this voice of "Cain" was not recognized. This witness, scenting danger, called all those belonging to her into the house, closing the upstairs window, and soon the noisy voices died away as this murderous gang made up the hill in the direction of Sunnyside. Out into the dark on this lonely country road full scope was given for the blackest of deeds. The wicked spirit of "Cain" had captured at least one of these men, but what really took place only some "great day" will reveal, and as they slunk away to their several homes their number was one less.

The dance was now over and most of the people had gone or were going home, and, according to village information, one of the latest to come up the hill was a most respected villager named George Mudd. He was accompanied by some other men, and carried a lamp in his hand. They had not gone far up the hill before one of the men called his attention to a man sitting on a stone and propped up against the hedge, the spot on the right side of the road being

still pointed out. Thinking he was in a drunken sleep they called out to him, but received no answer. The man with the lamp then went near to him, and shining his light was horrified to see the ghastly and blood-stained face of a dead man, who was at once recognized to be Joseph Leybourne. On his head were two wounds, as if inflicted with a very heavy instrument, and as the light shone round about the stones were seen to be red with blood. Later it is said that a heavy, sharp stone was found in the field over the hedge, covered with blood and hair.

These men with the lamp sought a kind of stretcher, and slowly and sadly they bore this poor bruised body to his home, which was a little above the Rose, Shamrock and Thistle Inn on the opposite side of the road. Wishing to break the news gently to his poor wife, they shouted in the door that Joe had been hurt, to which I was told she replied, by a kind of foreknowledge: "No, he has not been hurt; he is dead." This was on Tuesday morning, August 29th, the flower-show having been held on the Monday before. Now arose the question: who did this brutal deed? which question still remains unanswered.

At the adjourned inquest, a report of which appeared in the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* of Friday, September 22nd, 1865, a verdict of "Wilful murder" was returned against some person or persons unknown. A treasured copy of this paper I found in the possession of an old resident whom it was a real pleasure to meet, Mr. Robert Young, whose house at Sunnyside bears the curious name of "Penefine."

The local policeman of that day, Miles Robinson, known all round as "Miley," assisted by other members of the force and no doubt by detectives, scoured the countryside for evidence against any person or persons sufficient to bring to a trial, but in vain. Several were examined and a few suspected, and

it is even said that had it not been for the good character borne by Mr. Mudd some of those men who were with him when the body was discovered would have been gravely suspected. Also I came across more than one old resident in this beautiful district of wood and field who maintained that some of the gardeners from the Castle were not above suspicion. Lord Ravensworth was stirred to indignation at this horrible deed taking place on his estate, and to clear the Castle from the stain of harbouring anyone suspected he is said to have dismissed every one of his men servants who were present at the "Marquis of Granby" on that fatal night. At the same time he gave instructions that no more flower-shows were to be held at Streetgate—at least not in his time and with his permission. A black cloud also hung for some long period over this picturesque inn, and many who used to frequent the "Marquis" and to enjoy the company of the landlord were afraid to go near for fear that they should be among the suspected.

According to the local tradition the most suspected person seems to have been Bee, who has long since gone to his last account, though the evidence was not strong enough to bring him to trial. It is said that shortly before his death, he was heard in a public-house to say that though he was not the man who killed Leybourne, yet he knew the one who struck the blow. At the same time he swore that he would never reveal the name; and if he was possessed with the burden of such a secret, he carried it with him into the "land of shades."

However, there are those living who knew Bee and refuse to believe that he was the man, and more than one who knew him told me that, though a rolling stone, hard to knock against, yet he was not without his good points, one of which was to stand up for the weak against the strong. Though this may be quite

true, as all men have some good point about them, he seems to have been a character of somewhat bad repute, and he is still remembered as a tall, muscular, swash-buckler kind of character. He was quite notorious in his way, being a Cumberland man of no certain abode, who varied his cobbling with what is locally known as "bull walloping."

For my part after hearing the different accounts of this murder, I incline to think that he had a hand in the death of Leybourne, if he was not the actual murderer. This opinion was greatly strengthened on being told by one of my informants who clearly remembers the murder, that very early on the morning of the day on which the murdered man was found, Bee had a secret interview with each member of that rowdy gang who certainly led this poor man out to his death. Why did he do this but to warn and threaten? A man who was shrewd enough to do this and so strike terror into the hearts of these men, was likely to be one who, in that day especially, would be able to evade the law.

So ends this sad history of another undiscovered murder, which with the exception of the evidence given at the inquest, and reported in the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, is built up of scraps of information gathered from the old people of the district. In a word it is really their story retold, and even if not true in every detail is an honest attempt to peep into a bit of the dark past.

THE TRAGEDY OF URPETH MILL

ON a plateau in one of many picturesque parts of the county, the Urpeth district of the Team Valley, there stood at the time of which I write a corn mill known as Urpeth or Hutchinson's mill. Having both heard and read about the frightful murder associated with the mill, I quite recently paid a first visit to this lonely spot. All that now remains of the mill is a mere fragment of the mill-race, though the stones of the mill seem to have been built into the house now standing on the same site. Next to this is still to be seen the small cottage which formerly adjoined the mill, and is the house we are now mainly concerned with.

Standing on a beautiful autumn day in this peaceful and thickly wooded valley, with the trees clothed with lovely tints and the smiling burn winding its way happily, one felt so much impressed with the sights and sounds all around, that the very thoughts of murder in such a place seemed an outrage, both to humanity and all nature.

It was on the evening of Saturday, September 29th, 1860, when the silence of this peaceful valley was suddenly broken by thrilling cries of murder coming from the door of the mill-house, from which ran a terrified and wounded woman. This was Mrs. Lockey, being followed by her husband, Milner Lockey, who, with murder in his heart, had paid his wife, from whom he was separated for cruelty, an unwanted visit. After receiving an order of separation from the Chester-le-Street magistrates, Mrs. Lockey had removed to this lonely house next to the now untenanted mill, and her husband had gone to work at a colliery near Bishop Auckland.

About this time a bailiff of the name of Thomas Harrison was appointed to watch over certain crops

lately belonging to a Mr. Bell. Being for this purpose obliged to reside, for a time, in the district, he took lodgings in the house of Mrs. Lockey, which would no doubt be to her a financial help. Though her husband was separated from her for cruelty, he strongly objected to his wife taking in this lodger.

This jealousy, said to be quite unfounded, soon dominated his whole life, and not only did he brood over it daily while at his work at Leasingthorn Colliery, but he gave expression to his dark thoughts concerning his wife and Harrison. Though he had no legal right to visit his wife, he frequently paid unexpected visits. He used to tell it that his wife gave the comforts of a bed to her lodger, quite forgetting that he paid for it, while he slept on the floor of the same room. After these unwanted visits his jealousy naturally became worse, and rankled in his heart so much that he determined to end it all, to kill his wife and then himself.

With this object in view he set out for the mill. As he was nearing the end of his journey, he was met on the lane by one of his friends, in whose company he drank a glass of whisky, giving at the same time dark hints regarding the awful deed on which he was bent. In this frame of mind, stimulated no doubt by the whisky, he left his friend, and it was somewhere near seven o'clock when he arrived at the cottage from which the cries of murder were heard.

Lockey, on entering the kitchen, said in a sneering tone, "Now, honey, how are you coming on the neet?" His wife, not liking the cruel look on his face, nor the manner in which he addressed the words, asked him what had brought him down. To this he replied with a coarse epithet, "You'll find out before lang." After calling her the worst possible name a man can call a woman, he drew from his pocket a newly purchased knife, and as he shrieked out the words "thou'll not be lang here," he struck Mrs.

Lockey a blow on the chest. The bone in her corsets causing the knife to glance off, he struck her again with the same effect. However, being determined to kill his wife if possible, he lowered his hand and aimed a blow at her bowels, but the knife fortunately entered the thigh, causing a deep though not serious wound.

Mrs. Lockey's eleven-year-old son by a former marriage, Samuel Wilson, who was in bed upstairs, hearing the scuffle, came down and piteously cried out to this cruel brute, "Oh, Lockey, don't kill my mother, and I'll call you father." Harrison, who was in bed in the kitchen at the same time, raised himself up and begged Lockey not to kill his wife, giving a hint to the boy to run and seek help. Lockey, thinking that his last blow had succeeded, and intending, it is said, to kill himself, turned like a wild beast upon this helpless man in bed, and with an oath plunged his knife deeply into his left breast, and his poor victim fell back dead.

The boy rushed out of the house and ran as fast as he could to the Ridings farm for help, sobbing out as he arrived that Lockey had com'd and killed the "bum" man and was going to kill him and his poor mother. Two of the hinds named Wright and Hart returned with him to the mill. Just as they reached the house, Mrs. Lockey was making her escape, having, though severely wounded, wrested the knife from her husband, who finding that he had not succeeded in his main object, was pursuing her with hot haste.

Though this terrified woman with Lockey following her passed these two hinds, it is recorded to their discredit that they made no attempt to stop him. Mrs. Lockey, with almost superhuman endurance, ran up a steep hill into a field of uncut barley, when her husband lost sight of her.

Meanwhile a message had been sent to the police-office at Chester-le-Street, and soon two officers were found on the spot. The sergeant returned to Chester-

le-Street and dispatched an account of the murder and a full description of the murderer to the various police superintendents of the county. This done, a careful search of the neighbourhood was at once begun, and at half-past five on Sunday morning, Locky was discovered hiding in a pigsty near Urpeth.

Although the two hinds did not shine in allowing Locky to chase his wife without attempting to stop him, it was said that they proved their usefulness in a practical manner. One ran to give the news to the police, while the other kept a watch on Locky's movements, and having seen him creep into the pigsty, as he thought, unseen, kept his eye on the entrance till the police arrived, when they had him cleverly trapped.

The unfortunate bailiff, we are told, was highly respected in his own sphere in Newcastle, having been at one time an inspector of police, stationed at the Ouseburn. He was a married man of about forty-six years of age, and lived with his wife and family in Blandford Street.

Tried at Durham, Locky, with Thomas Smith, who murdered John Batey at Winlaton, was sentenced to death, and we read after his condemnation that he showed no signs of remorse or repentance for the crime he had committed, and even tried to justify himself. The execution took place in front of the County Courts at Durham on Thursday morning, December 27th, 1860, at nine o'clock. In spite of a bitter cold day, hundreds arrived at the scene before daylight, while thousands were on the roads leading to the city.

The account of this public double execution, summarized from the local Press of the day, is interesting, as showing how barbarous and crude were our methods, even up to the comparatively recent date of 1860. Though this was not the last public execution at Durham, the end of such a hateful sight was not far distant, and I believe the last public hanging there was in 1865.

WITCH FINDING IN NEWCASTLE

To us, in these days, it is a matter of utter amazement to read that such men as mayors and magistrates should have been so much influenced by fanaticism as to cause them to condemn to death anyone accused of witchcraft. "Strange," say a Surtees writer, "that any magistrate should write down such ridiculous evidence as that dictated to them at the trials." But, as usual, we are driven to blame the age, and also to pity the defect both of head and heart of these guardians of the town.

At the time about which we are writing—1649-50—the town was so much agitated by the belief that it was infested by witches, that a petition was sent to the Common Council, requesting that immediate steps be taken to put them down. After ordering that thanks be returned to these petitioners, this august assembly sent two sergeants to Scotland with the object of seeking up a reputed witch-finder, and to agree to pay him twenty shillings for every one he discovered, with "free passage thither and back again."

Having secured the services of this cold-blooded Scot, the magistracy of Newcastle sent their bellman throughout the town, calling on all who knew of suspected witches to bring them forward, so that they might be publicly examined by him at the Town Hall. Here was surely a golden opportunity for anyone having a spite against a neighbour. We can well imagine that as the bellman and crier went from street to street raising his uncanny cry, "Bring out your witches! Bring out your witches!" that many a

tragic scene would be enacted. Poor innocent women would be dragged away from their homes and families, amidst heart-rending cries and useless protests of innocence.

Arriving at the Town Hall these poor women were handed over to the mercies of this Scotch impostor, who pretended to find out witches by pricking them with pins, after which they were sentenced by the magistrates to be executed on the Town Moor.

Though according to Mackenzie it is not known how many were actually committed for trial, he states for a certain fact that in the month of August, 1650, fifteen so-called witches and one wizard were hanged on the Town Moor on one day.

The wonder is how these blinded officials, who were otherwise men of sound common sense, could have brought themselves to appoint anyone, and more especially a Scot, for this serious work. According to some rules of the Trade Guilds, men from over the Border were not allowed in their companies, and anyone calling a brother a " Scot " should forfeit six shillings and six pence " without forgiveness."

Though not considered fit company for Freemen, yet one of the very worst natives of this country was chosen to condemn their poor townswomen to death by the system of " payment by results."

One is almost tempted to wish that in these days the town walls had been standing so intact that this wholesale murderer was prevented from entering, and also that our forefathers had been ignorant of the Jewish command found in the book of Deuteronomy, " Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

However we rejoice to say that there was one English gentleman, Henry Ogle, Esq., afterwards a Member of Parliament for the county, who had his shrewd eyes on this brutal Scot, and kept them steadily upon him till he brought him to bay, knowing him to

be a vile impostor. Laying hold on him he demanded bond for his appearance at the next quarter sessions.

Taking advantage of this bond, he fled to his native country, hoping here to escape the hand of the law. Here he was sadly mistaken; for this inhuman monster was at once arrested and brought to trial.

At the trial it was revealed by evidence both revolting and indecent, that by his pin-pricking fraud he had pocketed large sums of money, in some cases receiving as much as £5 for each so-called witch.

He now saw that his game was up, and in the cool philosopher manner which had characterized him throughout, he listened to his just death sentence.

On the scaffold he confessed to having been responsible for the death of over two hundred and twenty women.

Though the name of this "animal" seems to be unknown, it is a certain fact that never a more cruel Scot ever entered the town of Newcastle.

ECHOES FROM BEYOND



THE HAUNTED MILL-HOUSE AT WILLINGTON QUAY

“There are more things in heaven and earth
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”

—*Hamlet*.

Most people, I imagine, are interested in a real live ghost story, and the more it gives us the cold shivers the more we like it.

When we were schoolboys, two such stories used to float about the air, often merely as names, until someone would so create them with life that we listened to them spell-bound. One was the “Ghost of Willington Mill,” and the other the “Spectre of Denton Hall.”

As there seems a danger of the present generation losing sight of these fine examples of local supernatural lore, I am setting out to attempt their retelling, beginning at Willington Mill.

Though I knew that the ruined mill, as well as its haunted house adjoining, which we used to pass by rail on the way to Tynemouth, have long since been razed to the ground, yet I thought it likely there might be some traces left likely to revive old scenes. Also I hoped to come across some of the old inhabitants who still carried in their memory the weird tales of the ghostly visitors to the mill-house. Therefore I took the train to Willington Quay, about five miles east from Newcastle, and soon found myself standing in one of the drabbest riverside villages.

The old flour mill has long been replaced by part of Haggie's rope works, and no doubt many of the original bricks, as well as some of the wood-work, would be used in its erection. The foundations seem to be those of the old building, and are washed by the same, now not over clean, gut whereon the keels sailed, with their grain and flour, to and from the once busy mill. Of the mill-house not a single vestige remains.

The story as told by most of our writers is so crowded with sights and sounds that, in trying to tell it over, it is not easy to remember the most important features. Now I would like to get rid of this seeming difficulty by bringing into prominence the most ghostly parts of this strange tale. This, it seems to me, can be best done by building upon the traditional stories that still linger about the village.

I was fortunate in meeting with one of the inhabitants, who with his old mother, had lived for a short time in the upper story of the haunted mill-house, and with a few of the women-folk, who talked about "Kitty," the mill ghost: but why the name I forgot to ask. Others talked of the luminous figure of a man who used to terrify everybody by lighting up the dark rooms of this same ill-fated house.

The mother of this man referred to, who lived to be over eighty, used to tell her children several weird stories that had been related to her by living witnesses. The most striking one was that of a fireman at the mill, who came rushing into one of the houses in Keelman's Row, a row of houses still standing near the site of the mill, and declared that he had seen a man come out of the fire-hole. So terrified, continued my narrator, was this poor man that he fell on the floor stunned with fear, vowing, as he fell, never more to go into the mill.

Now this "Kitty," the mill ghost, said by some to have flitted about the ruins of the mill so long as they remained standing, is but a survival of the lady spectre of the authentic narrative.

Willington Flour Mill, at the time of these ghostly visitations, which began about 1840, and continued for about five years after, was owned by Messrs. Unthank and Proctor. The large three-storied house adjoining was occupied by Mr. Proctor and his family, who had not long resided here before they were alarmed during the night by most unaccountable noises.

This went on so long, accompanied by visions, that it soon became the talk of the whole district around. This kind of talk reached the ears of a certain young doctor of North Shields of the name of Drury, who thought it no ghost at all but that the noises could be explained in a scientific manner. To prove it he got permission from Mr. Proctor to sit up all night accompanied by a Mr. Hudson, a chemist, also of Shields. Though they both took revolvers, the sceptical doctor was so sure that the whole thing was an old wife's tale that he left his downstairs, but his friend preferred to be ready for emergencies.

At eleven o'clock they ascended to the third story of this house, and by the light of two wax candles sat down to watch till daylight. Here these two brave doubters sat keeping their silent vigil, till it neared the "witching hour of night," when they were startled by the uncanny sound as of people pattering with their bare feet upon the floor. To this was added the further noise of knocking, in the midst of the pattering, followed by a nasty hollow cough, which re-echoed through the silent room. There must now have been a period of quiet, for Mr. Hudson, who was naturally feeling tired, fell asleep; but the evidently still defiant doctor kept his watch.

The hour of "his fiery trial" had now arrived, for

out of the closet door upon which his eyes were fixed there emerged the form of a female in grey garments with bowed head and extending hand, who approached his slumbering companion. The young doctor, who was no coward, rushed at this figure, giving, it is stated by Mr. Proctor, a most awful yell, but instead of grasping anything solid he fell upon his friend, and remembered nothing clearly for about three hours afterwards.

This well authenticated narrative, tells us that he declared he would not enter this house again for £10,000.

Not only did this same visitant frighten the servants, but young lady visitors saw her come out of the wall of the bedroom and lean over their bed, while others had the bed curtains held up all round, and rapidly let down again.

The poor children were also visited by her, whose appearance was made ghastly by her empty eye-sockets, which she seemed anxious to hide by bending her head.

On one occasion an intimate friend of the family opened the door in answer to a knock, letting in at the same time a lady in fawn-coloured silk, who walked straight upstairs. The opener of the door followed her, thinking it was a friend of Mrs. Proctor's making a call, and on reaching the drawing-room found that nothing had been seen or heard of any visitor.

The tales of a man-ghost, which still survive in the place, have their origin in the "Old Jeffrey" of the narrative.

One of the best supported records of the male ghost tells us of the figure of a bareheaded man in a flowing surplice-like robe, which glided backward and forward about one of the rooms, two or three feet from the floor. It then stood still in the window, luminous and transparent, diffusing a light all round. As it became more dim it assumed a ghastly blue

tinge, gradually fading away from the head downwards.

Apart from these ghostly visitations, the noises were so unbearable that Mr. Proctor tried every means to discover their cause, taking up the floors and putting down a kind of dusty material to detect footsteps, but without any success.

So great was the sensation caused by these mysterious sights and sounds, that several gentlemen spent the night in the house and bore testimony to their reality. Amongst the watchers were two non-conformist ministers from the neighbouring district, who also were convinced that it was no mere imagination that created these strange and weird noises. They ceased when the Proctor family left. Further, it has been stated on good grounds that, "As regards the numbers and characters of the witnesses it would be difficult to find a story of the supernatural so well substantiated," and "that all investigation has failed to discover a solution consistent with the rejection of spiritual agency."

Two traditions are given as to the origin of these visitations, one being that an old fortune-telling woman lived on this site, over two hundred years ago, who used to have dealings with a kind of satanic personality. Another is that a murder was committed on the premises while they were being built in 1801.

THE SPECTRE OF DENTON HALL

To me the picturesque old Tudor house of Denton Hall, in its setting of trees, has long seemed an ideal haunt for ghosts. Wishing to refresh my memory, as well, I hope, as that of others, with the story of the spectre of Denton, about which we used to hear so much in our younger days, I am going to make an attempt to revive it.

This spectre was known both as "Silky" and "Old Barbery," though more often as the former, because of her dress of rustling silk. Strange to say, this spiritual visitant never troubled the occupants of the Hall, but to the visitors she was a real terror, and to many one night spent under its roof was more than enough. To her it seemed a solemn duty to visit these unsuspecting people at midnight, and it is said that her visits foretold some impending misfortune or death. Two sisters of Macready the great actor were on a visit, and it is related, that coming down to breakfast one morning they declared that they could not stay another night in the Hall, though they refused to give any explanation of their sudden departure.

One can well imagine how terrified those unfortunate visitors would feel, whom we are told were awakened at midnight by a weird and thudding sound, as if something like a human body was being dragged, first out of a room, and then down a flight of stairs. Further horror was added when this dragging stopped at a window which was heard to be flung open, the conclusion being that the thing dragged was thrown out.

Though we may disbelieve all these instances of ghostly visitations, and hold them to be mere hallucinations, yet I think that none familiar with the character of the late Thomas Doubleday, one of our best local men of letters, will uphold him as one likely to write down anything he disbelieved. The following thrilling experience was dictated to him by an old lady friend, whom he by no means considered subject to mental delusions.

When about eighteen years of age she returned to Denton Hall late one night, after attending a ball at a neighbouring house, where she met her future husband, and in a happy frame of mind sat by the fire thinking of this partner at the dance. Her happiness, however, was quickly turned to surprise and fear for, on glancing round, she saw sitting in an antique chair on the opposite side of the fire-place, an old lady dressed in a gown of flowered satin, of extreme glossy stiffness, and of a long obsolete fashion.

Her wrinkled fingers were almost covered with rings, whose jewels flashed back the firelight in "rainbow hues." On her head she wore a satin hood of peculiar shape, and her face, which was that of a very old woman, was a close network of tiny wrinkles. "So, my young lady," said this strange intruder, "you've been at yon ball to-night, and you've been highly delighted, I can see. But if you knew what I know and could see with my eyes, your pleasure would be less."

Then fixing her keen grey eyes severely on this young lady, she gravely denounced the age as one of "pride and poverty," all "false and hollow, to the very glitter of the sideboard." "Trust not," she continued, "all that seems to glitter. Fair though it seems 'tis but the product of disease—even as is the pearl in your hair that glistens in that mirror yonder."

At the mention of her pearl, the young lady

instinctively glanced at the mirror, and when she turned her head a moment later, the old carved chair was empty. Though she now heard the rustle of silk, accompanied by quick, short footsteps retreating towards the door, she could see no traces of the strange woman in the room.

Then for the first time she became really alarmed, horror having driven away her power of speech. When she recovered her senses somewhat, she instinctively rushed to the door, to find it locked, forgetting in her terrible state of fear that she herself had locked it on entering. She spent the remainder of the long night in a state of sleepless terror, being afraid to open the door; and none but those who had gone through a similar ordeal could realize her relief when daylight brought the breakfast hour, and the company of her host and hostess. To them she at once told the strange story of her midnight experience, wishing at the same time to make it clear, to use her own words, that she "was not repelled by any angry or ill-bred credulity." After listening sympathetically to her story, they informed her that she was not the first who had been alarmed in a similar manner, and that not only visitors, but also servants had quitted the house in consequence.

This strange story concludes by telling us that the young lady slept no more in the same room, nor was she disturbed again by her midnight visitor in silk. Also that she never doubted for a moment, to use her own words, that she "did encounter something more than is natural—if not an actual being in some other state of existence. My ears have not been deceived, if my eyes were—which I cannot believe."

Regarding the origin of the visits of "Silky," a vague tale is told of a beautiful girl who was strangled in this house years ago by a jealous sister.

Denton Hall, situated about three miles north-west

of Newcastle, is said by some to have been built by the Monks of Tynemouth in 1503, as a summer residence, and out of the material from the Roman Wall which ran close by. Others contend that it was built at a much earlier date, and on the same site as an old castle, thought to have gone back to early Plantagenet days. After the Dentons had ruled their acres for many generations beginning in the reign of Edward II with John de Denton, the Manor and Castle became the possession of the Erringtons, said to be their descendants on the female side. It is also thought probable that it was one of this family who pulled down the old castle and built on its foundation the present Hall.

Though the Monks of Tynemouth may not have been the builders of the Hall, it is said that in later years they had a chapel in its grounds to which they travelled by an underground passage to Benwell Tower. Part of the garden of the Hall was used as the burial-ground where it is believed still rest the bones of some of the monks. Many interesting Roman remains have been discovered in the vicinity of the Hall, which is at present the residence of a well-known Newcastle solicitor.

Perhaps the most interesting period in the life of the Hall was during the residence of the Hon. Edward Montagu and his famous wife, described as "blue-stocking and lion-hunter," which began in 1760, long anterior to the ghost period, which some think even more interesting than the other. The Montagus, we are told, entertained as their guests some of the greatest celebrities of the day, including Sir Joshua Reynolds, the immortal Dr. Johnson, David Garrick, and other eminent men of the time. Though I have seen it stated that "the beloved vagabond," Oliver Goldsmith, also paid a visit to Denton, yet it is a matter of regret that this seems doubtful.

A walk at the east of the Hall is pointed out as the place where the hero of Boswell used to take his solitary strolls under the venerable trees, and the room where he slept is known as "Dr. Johnson's Chamber." It would be an interesting psychological problem to find out why "Silky" the ghost was so fond of haunting this chamber. Much as we are captivated by a genuine ghost story, none of us, I imagine, would care to meet "Silky" should we ever find ourselves midnight visitors to Denton.

Rather would we meet the spirits of these great men who honoured the Hall and its famous hostess by their presence, for we should be certain that they would only come to men of like mind to themselves.

OCEAN ECHOES



TYNEMOUTH PRIORY

AN IDYLL OF A BYGONE DAY

"WHEN we were boys," to use a well-worn phrase, and Whitley Bay and Monkseaton yet in their infancy, the enclosure at Tynemouth containing the Priory ruin, with its graveyard, the dungeon-like Castle of the Garrison with its barrack square, and the picturesque lighthouse, long since gone, had to one boy, at least, all the charms of fairyland, rich with golden treasures of romance.

Standing as it does upon what we Northerners think one of the most beautiful of all sea cliffs, this strongly guarded and rock-bound enclosure, seemed to me, in those days, nothing less than enchanted ground, visited by the shades of our brave Northumbrian ancestors, long since gone down "the aisles of time."

In the period I seek to recall, the public were privileged to roam freely over this interesting place, examine the now long obsolete guns, and enjoy being deafened by artillery practice, climb up the lighthouse, or like "Old Mortality" try to decipher the names on the grass-covered tombstones of the graveyard.

But everything seemed overshadowed and dominated by the high walls of the ruin, with the little Chantry of the Percys projecting from one of these walls, through the windows of which one remembered looking with longing desire to get inside.

Though I have read much interesting history on the Priory at Tynemouth since those early days, it is not my intention to burden the impression of the boy with the fuller knowledge of the man.

Further, what book of history, however correct, can in any degree equal the book of a boy's imagination? and as his imagination plays freely upon this venerable ruin, all written history pales before it as "dry-as-dust" school lessons to be learnt.

So let the present writer open, to him, the almost sacred pages of such a book, and reverently show the reader what is written thereon.

From the very earliest visit to this ruin one was impressed with feelings of sorrow approaching indignation that this once glorious Priory had suffered such woeful destruction, and though we had read something of the serious abuses laid to the charge of monastic institutions, yet to a boy this seemed no reason, in itself, why beautiful buildings should be avenged upon, as if they were responsible for the abuses.

As these stately ruins looked silently down upon us, full of the scars of sorrow and pain which the cruel spoilers had wantonly inflicted upon them, one felt that if they could speak what a tale they could unfold!

Yet it was this silence of loneliness which stimulated one's imagination, wandering far beyond the limits of historical facts and data, till one seemed literally to live amongst the past scenes of this once important Priory, and to be in danger of ascending from fact to fiction.

In our mind's eye we picture a gathering of our Saxon forefathers, who, with the Northumbrian King Edwin, attended the foundation ceremony of this Priory, which he, true to his kingly responsibility, is said to have founded in the year 626, shortly after his own baptism into the Christian Faith.

Commencing, no doubt, as a rude church on this lonely cliff, it gradually grew up into not only a busy Priory and centre of worship for the people who found their way to Tynemouth in these stirring times, but also

a guide for the mariners: and during the darkness of night, a lamp would be kept burning for their guidance.

For over a hundred years all was activity and worship, and the sun arose and set on this beautiful Priory on the cliffs of Tynemouth: but alas this peace was now to come to an end, for the Danish pirates had begun (about 787) their first invasion of England. Their first raid on Tynemouth being in 800.

The prominence of this place directed the plunderers; and we can imagine we see these wild Scandinavians hammering at the gates, the terrified people fleeing before them, and the brave monks cruelly murdered rather than desert their posts and give place to these heathen. Now all is silent as the grave, monks slain, the people fled, the once beloved sanctuary a total wreck, and the sound of the wild sea as it dashes against the rocks, ascending like a funeral dirge.

It is not long before we once more hear the sound of building, for other monks, nothing daunted, are rebuilding the Priory, and many willing Northumbrians gladly coming to their help, it is quickly completed and worship going on as before.

Not a great many years elapsed before the Danes again invaded our shores, and sighting the rebuilt Priory repeated for a second time their ruthless acts of destruction, plunder and murder.

Yet again the gallant monks with their helpers raised another building, only to suffer the fate of the two former ones.

After two more cruel raids by the Danes all that now remained was a lonely pile of stones.

On a certain day this place of deserted tombs was visited by the gallant Robert Mowbray, Earl of Northumberland, the same who rebelled against Norman rule under William II, and for defence fortified the castle at Bamburgh.

This sad sight we imagine so deeply impressed him that he at once resolved to refound this ill-fated Priory, and to repeat what the Northumbrian King Edwin had done before him (this was about 1095).

Soon the practical monks would produce their plans, which they would submit to the Earl, and the place once more rings with the sound of builders' tools, and in course of time a more glorious building than any of its predecessors stood on the cliff.

Now for the longest though last period of its existence, the Priory at Tynemouth prospers as it never had done before; the monks and the priests serve in sacred things, and the choir make this stately edifice ring with their sacred music.

This Priory now became both wealthy and famous, several kings paying homage at the shrine of St. Oswin, and it is said that other kings lie buried within its walls. But this prosperity had its great dangers, and in course of time, we are told by historians, many of their beautiful ideals vanished, and instead there was discord between the monks and laity.

But darker clouds had long been gathering, till they break as the waves break upon the rocks below. "Down with the monasteries" now became the order of the day, and right well did the iconoclasts do their work, and for the last time Tynemouth's Priory and church were laid in ruins.

Though the quarrels of kings and time-serving cardinals were not of any concern to a mere boy, yet it did seem a shame that a once glorious pile, the result of so much patient and devoted labour, should be reduced to this pathetic ruin. However, we are thankful that the little Chantry, already mentioned, has been preserved, and it seems to cling, as it were in fear, to the broken walls of its mother-church.

But being now towards evening, and the place lonely and deserted, it is time to make homeward. Passing

again through the great gateway of the Castle, which had been besieged by the Scots in 1644, I walked along the sea-banks to gaze once more on that matchless view of the cliffs of old Tynemouth, crowned by its ruin, which in the distance looked magnificent. The little white lighthouse as it stood against the background of dark stone added distinctly to the beauty and softness of this picture, though the almost hideous Castle seen in the corner, gave it, to me, a touch of hardness.

Nevertheless, as this familiar view gradually vanishes in the distance, I was more than ever convinced that for a coast view it is, to me at least, unequalled; and having seen it in summer and winter, both with the immature imagination of a boy, and the mature imagination of the man, I am old-fashioned enough to cherish a warmer feeling for classical Tynemouth than for its more popular seaside rivals.

This being so, one can easily understand the native of Tynemouth being moved to tears, as, in a far distant land, he hears the singing of "The Cliffs of Old Tynemouth." Whatever be the poetic merits of this song, it certainly has the power of giving life to its words:

"Oh, the cliffs of old Tynemouth they're wild and they're
sweet,
And dear are the waters that roll at their feet,
And the old ruined abbey, it ne'er shall depart,
'Tis the star of my fancy, the home of my heart.

Other lands may be fairer, but nought can be seen
Like the shore where our first love and boyhood have been,
Oh, give me the cliffs and the wild roaring sea,
The cliffs of old Tynemouth for ever for me."

REMINISCENCES OF A SHIPWRECK

MORE years ago than I care to remember our household went from a quiet country village in the west to spend the winter at Tynemouth, taking up our abode in a house in Front Street, on the opposite side, though not directly opposite, to the house, No. 57, where Harriet Martineau stayed, wrote some of her books, and was visited by Thomas Carlyle, Charlotte Brontë and other famous people. Apart from the contrast between the country and the seaside, the great fascination for us boys lay in the stormy seas; and in the days I am seeking to recall we got them in right good earnest.

When we awoke each morning our first question was not, as in the summer, "is the weather fine and the sea fit for bathing or boating?" Instead, we listened eagerly for the howling of the gale around the houses, and the louder it howled the better we were pleased, quite heedless, in our unintentional selfishness, of those in peril on the sea.

We liked nothing better than to face the wildest gales, either on the pier, where we often got well drenched from the high waves which broke against the sides, or to ascend the hill known as the "Spanish Battery," and to stand for hours near the house of the Volunteer Life Brigade, where this noble body of men were ever in readiness to lend their valuable aid to any ship that should come to grief; and their apparatus with rocket, running gear, etc., was a thing of wonder indeed.

Day after day found us eagerly watching the ships, many of which were sailing ones, battling against the heavy seas, in their attempt to cross the bar and run

into the mouth of the Tyne, and we quite trembled with a strange excitement, as we saw them arise on the huge waves, forming a most dangerous angle, expecting every moment to see them founder.

“As with labouring throes they roll on either side,
And dip their gun'nals in the yawning tide.”

But again and again these brave vessels would right themselves, until to our great relief they ran, or more correctly, were swept by the tremendous force of water, safely into “Father Tyne,” while from the onlookers there arose, not what I should describe as cheers, but rather a deep emotional expression, a kind of sigh of relief.

To talk to old boatmen, fishermen, and, above all, old mariners who had “sailed the seas” was what we called a real treat, and with unbounded wonder and admiration we listened to these great personages, or, more correctly speaking, heroes. The saddest tale, I remember, was told by an old sailor who had begun life on the sea.

“I have had many sad experiences while at sea,” he said, “but nothing affected me so much as the one I am going to relate. After a very rough voyage homeward we found ourselves being carried by the wind dangerously near some cruel rocks, off, I think, the coast of Ireland, and as our vessel was a sailing ship, as most vessels were in those days, we were absolutely at the mercy of the elements. On one of these rocks we were horrified to see some human beings, the remnant of a shipwrecked crew, who cried most piteously to us to help them, as the angry waves broke over them.

If we could have gone to their aid we would have been dashed to pieces on the rocks, and we were almost a wreck as it was, with torn sails, broken mast and other serious damages, but we were madly rushed past

these unfortunate creatures, and their most heart-rending cries were borne along by the gale; and I shall never forget those cries until my dying day."

There was emotion in this old sailor's words as he concluded by saying, "that we felt like murderers after we had left those poor people to perish," and from what I could glean from the entire tone of his narrative, this was the beginning of a change in his life, for he more than once in the course of his tale expressed his earnest thankfulness to God for his own deliverance from this and many other dangers on the sea.

Great treat though it was to talk to these old salts, yet, as I have already said, the real fascination of a winter here was in the sight of the wild waves being dashed into foam against the rocky shore. In our reckless love of adventure, we often got dangerously near to the cruel waves as they hurled themselves against those rocks which form the base of the high cliff on which stands the Priory, and one of our greatest delights was to wade knee-deep amongst the white surf which the fury of the sea had left on this dangerous shore.

Yes, we took a kind of, shall I say, fiendish delight in the sights and sounds caused by the sea in its raving madness; indeed we secretly hoped to be able to witness a shipwreck, though, of course, we said to ourselves, we had no wish for such a terrible thing to happen. But after a certain day and sight of one of the cruelest deeds of the sea, I at least regarded a storm at sea in quite a different light.

Returning home late in the evening on this particular day, after spending most of our time watching the ships crossing the bar, we were soon in bed and sleeping as only boys know how. About midnight we were awakened by the sound of heavy footsteps outside the bedroom door, and a gruff voice talking about ships on the rocks, then we heard a thud as if something was

thrown upon the floor. We were up like a shot, and opening our bedroom door we saw lying against the door of the room where our parents slept an oilskin coat, a tarpaulin hat, and a pair of heavy sea-boots.

Then we heard a loud-voiced man shouting to our father through the door that he had brought this rig-out because he thought he might like to come out either on the pier or the Spanish Battery, as something, he was sure, would happen this wild night; and guns of distress were heard in several directions.

We begged to be allowed to come out, but when my father opened the door and felt the full blast of the gale, he forbade us with no uncertain voice not to venture out on such a fearful night, and after sitting up for an hour or two awaiting his return, we thought we would go back to bed, and lie awake until his return. But we found sleep our master, and were to call more than once to get up for breakfast next morning. Here we learned that one ship at least had been wrecked outside the piers, and it was feared that several lives were lost. It seems that neither the rocket nor the life-boat had been able to reach the ill-fated vessels.

This news filled me with a kind of remorse, for now had happened the thing I felt anxious to see, and though I was not allowed to witness this awful disaster in reality, I soon saw quite as much as I ever want to see of a shipwreck. For several days after this sad event we wandered about the rocky shore under the Priory Cliff, looking for flotsam and jetsam, and many curious things we saw come ashore.

On one of these days we crossed over the pier to go on to the Haven, which was one of our favourite haunts, mainly because here was kept the life-boat; and here also we met and loved to talk to Fry the boatman, and none was so interesting to us as he. In his bright red shirt he was both feared and respected by us boys,

who delighted to row in his boats in the summer, and to listen to his talk in the winter. Few men loved the sea as he did. In fact he seemed part of it in company with his boats; and one who loves old times and old friends offers these few words as a small tribute to his memory.

Near the mortuary we saw a small group of people, and at once suspected the reason, and I can remember to this day the cold shudder felt as drawing nearer I saw a dead sailor being carried on a stretcher from the shore where he had been picked up, and learned that others had also been picked up that day. It was the sight of this poor mariner, covered over with tarpaulin, and the red drops of blood on the yellow sand that completed what had begun on the night of the wreck; and made storms at sea no longer mainly matters of fascination and romance; for now one realized that at their worst they made women widows and children fatherless; and though I shall always like the sight of waves breaking into white foam upon the rocks, yet I shall never again lose sight of the human background of weeping wives and children.

As, after many years, I am recalling this sad and never-to-be-forgotten sight, there comes instinctively into one's mind Kingsley's beautifully sad song of the sea, "The Three Fishers," the last verse of which will fittingly close this tragedy of the sea:

"Three corpses lay out on the shining sands
In the morning gleam as the tide went down;
And the women are weeping and wringing their hands,
For those who will never come back to the town."

A VISIT TO THE HOME OF THE DELAVALS

It would be difficult to find an English family who have left a deeper impress, both on their own district, and on the country, than the Delavals.

From the days when they came over with William the Norman they have ever been ready to serve her in all possible directions. Whether as soldiers, sailors, statesmen, or leaders of industry, a Delaval has been found standing out prominently among the men of his day and generation.

Not content with this scope for their energies, they threw themselves whole-heartedly into the gay and too often wicked life of English society. They shone in all kinds of amusements and sports, including horse-racing, the boxing ring, and the stage; to which was added an inborn love of playing jokes upon their fellows, whenever they found an unsuspecting victim.

For this worldly and extravagant side of life they have been described as "the Gay Delavals," and if social history speaks truly, they well deserved such a "Byronic" title. Nowhere have I been more reminded of the gay life of Lord Byron and the society in which he mixed than in reading the history of this family. Indeed by their manner of conducting themselves in the things of life, I should say that some of them could easily leave the great poet far behind.

Lastly, they not only shone in all the above-mentioned directions, but it was said of them that "all the members of this family, male and female, were models of grace and beauty."

One of the most effective reminders of the influence of the Delavals upon the social and industrial life of the North is found in the frequency with which their name is used before that of village, pit, street, etc.

It is not my intention here to give any lengthened description of the acts of this family of so many parts, but merely to set down my own personal impressions of a visit to Seaton Sluice and Delaval Hall, with the little Chapel of Our Lady.

Taking the 'bus from Whitley Bay on a recent fine September afternoon, I soon found myself standing before the harbour of this quaint and romantic little village by the sea. To one interested in the history of the Delavals, to look upon this harbour and on its surroundings was but to read their "handwriting on the wall." Casting our eyes farther beyond we see remains of bottle works, salt pans, etc., and in the far distance are to be seen the smoke of pit chimneys; all adding their testimony to the unique enterprise of this family.

This picturesque little harbour, which has been so often well described both by pen and brush, was built by a Sir Ralph Delaval during the reign of Charles II. We read that for two hundred years it was a small seaport, possessing a fair-sized fleet of sailing ships, as well as a busy industrial centre, and that its originator was amongst the first to develop the local coal trade.

I was specially interested in the cut which Lord Delaval caused to be made through the solid rock, to form another opening from sea to the harbour. It has been spoken of as "the boldest engineering scheme of the seventeenth century carried out by any single landowner or manufacturer in the United Kingdom."

Among the many other things to be observed by the visitor is the remaining portion of the gate of the

sluice, which gave the name to the village. The village, like the harbour, teems with reminders of its wonderful past, and the family who founded it.

Speaking for myself, I love this old-world place with its haunting memories, and would much rather have it remain as it is than become a popular up-to-date seaside resort.

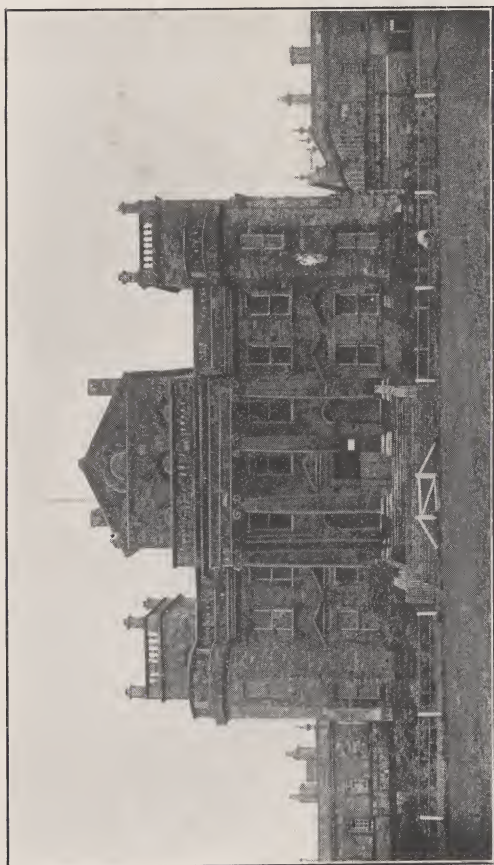
I have seen it stated, though I don't know whether true or not, "that it was from here that Sir Walter Scott borrowed his description of the little port of Ellangowan in 'Guy Mannering.'" If this is true, which we sincerely hope, it will add further romance and charm to what is beyond doubt one of the most wonderful landmarks on our north-east coast; nay, in England.

After resolving soon to return to Seaton Sluice, I set out to walk on to Seaton Delaval Hall, that other now pathetic memorial of the family, situated something like a mile westward along the Blyth road.

On our left, the first thing to notice is the ruined Starlight or Stirling Castle as it stands in a picturesque setting of trees, said to have been built in a single day by Sir Francis Blake Delaval, for a wager, the materials having been prepared beforehand. He was the most dissipated of the family, and has been described as "the most accomplished lothario of his age."

A little farther on in the same direction is to be seen the lofty dome of the mausoleum, towering above the trees, speaking mournfully of the death by misadventure, when only nineteen years of age, of the last son and heir of the family. It was never consecrated owing to the exorbitant fees demanded by the Bishop of Durham, and is now rapidly falling into decay.

The scenery on this road by the sea distinctly improves as we advance, and after passing, as it were,



[By courtesy of R. Johnston & Sons

Delaval Hall.

a wall of trees, this magnificent palace suddenly breaks in upon our view, with its wooded background, its noble courtyard, and its innumerable windows. On either side of the castle-like north doorway, which is similar to that facing south, is an immense wing, with something resembling cloisters forming the base.

The entire appearance of this lordly seat of the Delavals, with its many styles of architecture, its stately columns and arches, defies all description.

Certain I am that no one seeing this glorious picture for the first time can ever altogether forget it. Though several years have passed since my first visit, yet so deeply was it then engraven on my memory that on seeing it again for the second time it appeared like a very familiar picture out of a book. It is from one of the windows overlooking the courtyard, known as the "ghost chamber," that the "White Lady" is said to watch at sunset for the return of her absent lover, the last direct heir of the Delavals.

Not being able to get inside I strolled over as much of the grounds as are open to the public, at the same time viewing the Hall from every possible aspect, with that increasing wonder which is akin to awe.

The sight of the much dilapidated south front, with its broken massive Grecian columns, filled one with that peculiar kind of sadness known only to those whose mind often dwells on the mighty past.

From this noble south front, with the modern cricket pitch quite near, we get a fine view over the park, ending in a background of trees.

Directly in front, and perhaps a quarter of a mile from the Hall, is to be seen towering upwards a high stone obelisk, which, like a tombstone, speaks of death. It was erected by the friends of the distinguished Admiral George Delaval to mark the spot to which he

was dragged to death in June, 1723, by his unruly horse. About a mile to the north-west, and to the right of the public road, there stands amongst some trees another similar obelisk marking the spot where he first fell. Though he had distinguished himself in arms during the reign of Queen Anne, yet he is best remembered, at least in the North, as the member of the family who, in 1718, commenced the building of the Hall, being completed in 1728 by his nephew, Francis Blake Delaval.

It was erected on the site of the old castle of the feudal Barons de la Val whom, as we have seen, began their career with the Conqueror. The designer, as everyone knows, was the famous architect, Sir John Vamburgh, and it is said that this building will fitly compare with any of the work of this great master.

Be this as it may, I felt sure beyond question, as I stood here on this fine September afternoon, that never had I seen anything to equal it, not only in the North, but anywhere else; and I do hope that one day someone will rise to restore it from its somewhat pitiable state of neglect. I was glad, however, to notice that a part of it was habitable, and to learn from one of the men on the estate that Lord Hastings resides in it during part of the year.

Lord Hastings is the present owner, the estate having passed to his family, the Astleys, through marriage and the want of any legitimate male heir.

"How are the mighty fallen," was my last thought as I turned to leave this partially ruined building, and I wondered in my own mind how much of its ruin, with that of this once powerful family, was due to the dissipation of so many of its members. The same thought came across my mind on looking at the solemn and empty mausoleum; for we are told that had the last male heir, for whose young body it was built, not being tainted with the blood of his

ancestors, he would not have met his early fate in the manner he did.

Tombstones to the memory of the fallen are those two buildings. Somewhat ironical, surely, read the words of the family motto, "Dieu nous conduite."

Before leaving the grounds at the west end, I entered the little Chapel of Our Lady, believed to be the only vestige remaining of the original castle, as well as "one of the purest and most perfect specimens of Norman architecture in the kingdom." How many local people are aware of this? In the modern porch, lying on a window-sill, I turned over a rude stone block, and found on it the figures 1103, which has been assumed by local historians to mark the date of building both of the castle and chapel.

Above the door leading into the sacred edifice is to be seen some ancient stonework, and in the wall three shields bearing the family arms.

As I opened the door and looked into this place for the first time, its entire antiquarian atmosphere, its "dim religious light," and the Norman arches beyond, were to me more impressive than any written description could ever be:

Though on this first visit to the chapel I was naturally more affected by the general effect, or tone, of the whole, than by the sight of any matter of detail, yet I was able to note some of the most important.

The shields to be seen on the wall above this door were similar to those in the porch, and hung on the two side walls are what appeared to be framed coats of arms. Projecting from above are a few tattered flags, each telling their own tale of war.

On each side of the Holy Table, as if to guard it, there is a recumbent stone figure in splendid state of preservation, said to be a crusading member of the family with his wife.

Amongst other items of interest are two old chairs

standing within the altar rails, bearing the Delaval crest of a ram's head, and near the east window a stone bracket, whereon it is said once stood an image of the Virgin Mary.

I noticed on the north wall a built-in Saxon window, wondering at the same time why it was blocked up; and though there is said to be an extremely rare piscina in the chapel, this was one of the many things I overlooked.

Underneath the chancel is the family vault. The last of the Delavals to be buried here was the dissipated builder of Starlight Castle, who died at the early age of forty-eight.

On the formation of the parish of Seaton Delaval, this family chapel, whose date of consecration is lost in antiquity, was presented to the Church of England by the then Lord Hastings, becoming the parish church in 1902.

Despite all that I had seen in my enjoyable visit, both to Seaton Sluice and the Hall, I felt convinced, as I reluctantly closed the door of the porch, that here stood the best and most lasting memorial of this now departed race of men, and in particular of its founder who is believed to be buried within its walls.

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